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Myron Magnet

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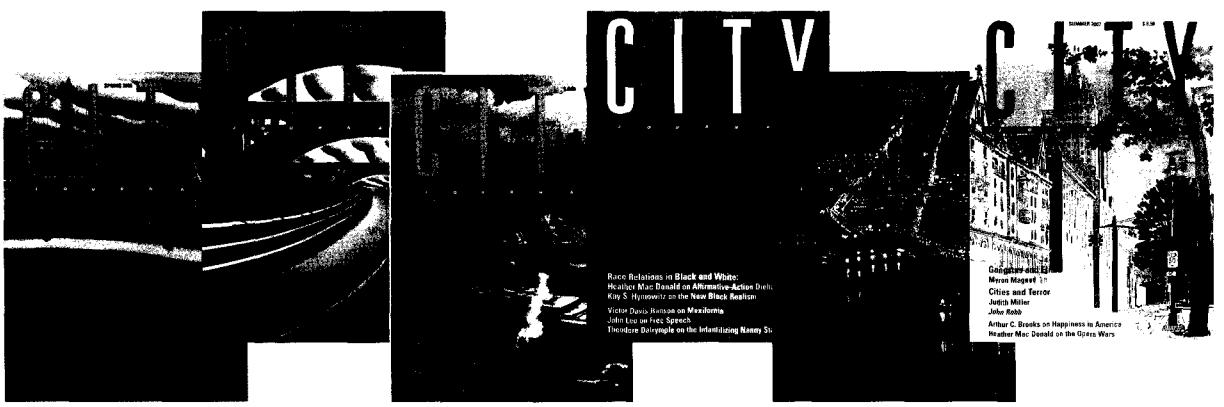
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In Prospect

In the nearly six years since 9/11, no American city has suffered a catastrophic terrorist strike. A key reason that the U.S. has stayed safe, reports Judith Miller in the exhaustively researched "On the Front Line in the War on Terrorism" (page 28), is the cutting-edge work of the nation's two largest police forces, the NYPD and the LAPD. Led by two dynamic cops, Commissioner Ray Kelly in New York and Chief William Bratton in L.A., the forces have adopted different methods of fighting terror. Kelly's NYPD, wielding vast resources—including a small army of sworn officers, an all-star team of experts, and its own undercovers, who've helped unravel several deadly plots since 9/11—sets the gold standard, Miller argues, achieving a terror-fighting capability on par with any law enforcement agency's.

With scarcer resources, Bratton has stressed working with other agencies—to such good effect, says Miller, that the feds see the LAPD as a model for other cash-poor police departments across the nation. In a gripping sidebar, she describes the LAPD's top counterterrorism success to date: breaking up what appears to have been an al-Qaida cell in Hollywood.

Kelly and Bratton won't be able to relax anytime soon, as John Robb shows in his chilling glimpse into the near future, "The Coming Urban Terror" (page 42). The author of the much-discussed *Brave New War* explains that the very things that make cities so successful in the modern economy—efficient international networks of communications, energy, capital, and services—also make them vulnerable to terrorist disruption. New technologies have also exponentially increased the capacity of small groups to inflict massive damage for little cost. The scariest threat, Robb believes, is bioweapons. The technology for creating lethal new strains of viruses and bacteria is already widely dispersed. So it's only a matter of time before "suicide vectors"—terrorists who infect themselves with such diseases—begin attacking our cities. Our market societies can best defend themselves, Robb says, by decentralizing services and security.

The creativity of free markets is a theme of two more stories in this issue. Steven Malanga's "The New Privatization" (page 50) details how U.S. governors and mayors are solving a big problem—crumbling infrastructure—by auctioning off bridges and roads to private firms, for vast sums; those firms promise better upkeep and greater efficiencies. And Canadian doc David Gratzer shows on page 90 how our northern neighbor's single-payer health-care system, held up by American activists as a model for us, has led to long waits and worsening care. Fed-up Canadians are turning to the market, including new private clinics, for answers to their health-care woes.

Two provocative stories in this issue focus not on markets but on culture. America has made eradicating racism against blacks its domestic imperative for half a century, with such success that African-Americans now hold leading positions throughout our society and a black middle class thrives. How is it, then, that a large black urban underclass remains trapped in poverty, educational failure, illegitimacy, and crime? Myron Magnet's tour de force "In the Heart of Freedom, in Chains" (page 12)—ranging from an analysis of the Duke "rape" case to unpacking the dehumanizing lyrics of Snoop Dogg—locates two culprits: an elite culture that continues to portray Western civilization as a monster, crushing nonwhites; and a self-destructive worldview, prevalent among young urban blacks, that sees bourgeois success as selling out and celebrates the gangsta's world of "niggas" and "hos." It's past time, argues Magnet in this sequel to his classic *The Dream and the Nightmare*, for blacks to break with that worldview—and for white elites to stop condoning it.

A cultural battle is going on for opera's soul, too, and Heather Mac Donald describes it vividly in "The Abduction of Opera" (page 104), the result of six months of reporting and a lifelong love of one of the West's cultural jewels. The struggle pits beauty's defenders—with New York's Met holding the line—against trendy European directors, who've brought sexual perversity, violence, and agitprop to their stagings of Handel, Mozart, and other giants, who must be rolling in their graves.

—*Brian C. Anderson*

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soundings

Street Cleaning in Philly

Is reform finally coming to a corrupt city?

More than 15 years after long-struggling Philadelphia elected sometime reformer Ed Rendell mayor, the City of Brotherly Love has more murders per year than New York City, with just one-sixth the population. It's the only major American city whose population shrank in the 1990s, and the only one where more people commute from the city to the suburbs than the other way around. It's a town, as one Philadelphian put it, of "proudly low expectations"—which are rarely disappointed.

But now it looks as if Philly may at last be ready to embrace change. Democratic mayoral nominee Michael Nutter won a closely contested primary with the endorsement of every significant newspaper and good-government group, in a climate in which a majority of voters, not just for the general election but even in the Democratic primary, have identified crime as their Number One concern. (The general election is usually a formality in a city that hasn't elected a Republican mayor since 1941.) A longtime foe of current mayor John Street, Nutter, a councilman since 1991, enjoys a reputation for seriousness and solid ethics—he introduced the legislation that created the city's first ethics board—in a town famously short on both.

Nutter ran on a platform of lowering the extremely high tax and crime rates that have driven businesses and the middle class out of the city. That's hardly the usual formula in a primary often decided by municipal workers, most of whom, by law, must live in the city and who thus make up the largest electoral bloc. But after the early front-runner, U.S. Congressman Chaka Fattah, a classic suit in search of an office, failed to generate momentum, the race boiled down to a black-white contest—as it almost always does in Philly. The chief rivals were Nutter (black) and businessman and former deputy mayor Tom Knox (white), with congressman and political fixer Bob Brady and state representative and longtime reformer Dwight Evans in the second tier. After the major press endorsements all went his way, Nutter pulled away from the wealthy Knox, who had contributed generously to his own campaign.

To get this far, Nutter has had to navigate the city's zany, rough-and-tumble political culture. One example: a mystery man in a shark suit, calling himself "Tom the Loan Shark," shadowed candidate Brady every day and held a press conference to announce that he'd been harassed by members of a union aligned with another candidate. Another: the aborted mayoral run of Mayor Street's brother Milton, a hot-dog vendor under indictment for corruption and tax evasion, who'd taken advantage of his brother's power to procure a major airport concession contract. And that's not to mention Mayor Street himself, who, term-limited out of office, spent time and money to work with a political advocacy group aggressively attacking Nutter.

Nutter has the kind of reform agenda that people wrongly associate with Rendell, who entered office with a mandate for change and a city teetering on bankruptcy. Rendell immediately went to battle with the city's powerful unions, which "hadn't had a bad day in 30 years," he charged. After winning significant concessions, though, Rendell aligned himself with Street, then the city council president. Rendell took care of downtown, which thrived, while Street ran the rest of the city as his private patronage kingdom. With his eye on higher office and his reputation secure, Rendell chose not to pursue the reforms that other innovative mayors enacted in the 1990s. He opposed welfare reform and did little to fight crime outside of downtown. Despite its beautiful architecture and skyline, Philly's a city where a ten-minute walk from City Hall leaves you in Third World poverty, danger, and despair.

When the still-popular Rendell left the mayor's office in 1999 to head up the Democratic National Committee, Street, who's black, ran for mayor with his endorsement, winning by just 8,000 votes in a race against a white Republican foe, Sam Katz. Street's first term was marked by graft and a series of colorful scandals, all of which led Katz to oppose him again four years later. It seemed that rising frustration with Street theater—his declarations that "the brothers are running the city now" and

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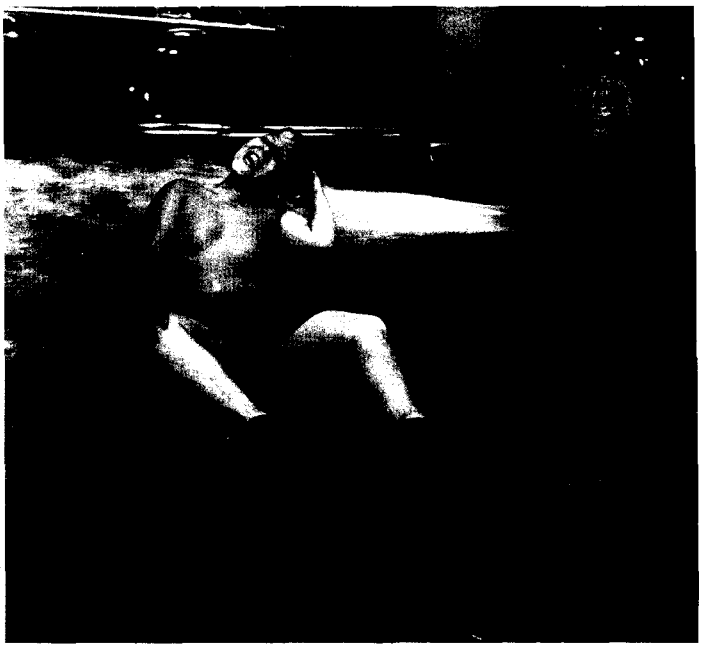
that "you have to pay to play"—might shake out the handful of votes that Katz needed. Street trailed in polls.

But then came the incident that allowed Street to portray himself as a victim of Republican racism. With great fanfare, he announced that he'd found a bug in his office, which turned out to have been planted by the FBI as part of an ongoing corruption investigation. He then proceeded to solidify his support among black voters on the "at-least-he's-our-bum" theory of leadership perfected by former Washington, D.C., mayor Marion Barry. Street spent the rest of the campaign bragging that he was just playing the game as it had always been played; in one debate, he cheerfully acknowledged that contracts went to friends first, just as under his white predecessors. Whom else would he give them to? His enemies?

Meanwhile, the city's already out-of-control crime rate kept climbing. Murders rose from 330 in 2004 to 406 in 2006, and have gone up at a higher rate this year, even as crime continues to decline in big cities nationwide. *Time* rated Street one of America's three worst mayors in 2005. Philadelphia seems to have come to the same conclusion in the recent primary. Nutter won over Street's opposition; several candidates pointedly attended screenings of *The Shame of a City*, a documentary that portrayed Street unfavorably; Street's son, Sharif, lost a bid for an at-large seat on the Philadelphia City Council, garnering a mere 7 percent of the vote; and Milton Street dropped his bizarre mayoral bid, which not even his brother backed, and ended up running against his nephew for the at-large seat, faring about as well. As one *Philadelphia Inquirer* columnist put it: "Rare is the twice-elected mayor who is as disliked, distrusted and dismissed as John Street."

In some ways, Nutter inherits an easy job—he has plenty of low-hanging fruit to pluck by taking steps that other cities took years ago to reduce crime and cut taxes. Still, his proposal for an NYPD-like stop-and-frisk crime plan has met a ferocious response from the organized interests that have portrayed him as "not black enough" (Nutter's reply: "I have a civil right not to be shot"), and a high-profile incident early on would



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be disastrous. Nutter also has a rough road ahead in throwing the elected bums out, as he's promised to do, since he'll need their support to change the laws governing their own behavior. And of course, Philadelphia has elected reformers before who've failed to survive its cutthroat political culture, most recently Rendell, who accomplished just enough to be elected governor but left the city little better off than he found it. But if there's hope for Philly, it lies in Nutter's breaking the political compact that goes back to Rendell and Street, in which Center City and the university neighborhoods remain safe and well patrolled, while much of the rest of Philly takes its chances.

—Harry Siegel and Fred Siegel

Do Immigrants Still Nourish Cities?

Not today's—and they drive away low-wage American workers.

Proponents of our current immigration system often argue that we should preserve or even expand it because immigrants are essential to our cities' health. Foreign-born workers, this

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Soundings

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argument goes, replace American-born city-dwellers who would rather live in the suburbs, and use their talent and energy to help urban neighborhoods and industries revive and thrive.

A classic example of this reasoning was a recent *New York Times* article about proposed federal immigration reforms, which would give immigration priority not to the families of recent immigrants but to skilled workers. Such reforms, the article warned, might close off "the currents that have long fed the city's mom and pop entrepreneurship . . . and the family networks that nurture and help assimilate newcomers." Experts cited in the story argued that immigrants who arrived under the current system have been central to the city's revival, and noted that 40 percent of the city's population today is foreign-born.

That argument was valid back in the 1970s and 1980s—when immigrants helped renew New York by replacing fleeing middle-class families—but it isn't any longer, because today's immigrants are driving away our own native-born, unskilled workers, who otherwise might want to stay and grab a piece of the economic opportunity that flourishing big cities offer.

Remember how dramatically different a place New York was in the mid-1970s. Rising crime, a deteriorating school system, and high taxes prompted an exodus from Gotham, so that by the end of the 1970s, the city's population had shrunk to its lowest level in decades. Reflecting that flight were shrinking property values, rising vacancies, and increasing abandonment of properties.

But amid the gloom, newcomers flooded into the United States, thanks to 1965 legislation that sparked far more immigration than anyone anticipated. Many headed for struggling cities like New York, where they could find inexpensive housing and an economy that, while foundering, still offered enough opportunity to gain a foothold in America—and a chance at a far better life than available back home. The immigrants repaid the city by bolstering many neighborhoods and by rolling up their sleeves, creating new businesses or staffing existing ones.

That wave of the 1970s and 1980s was the start of what's now called the Second Great Immigration. Wave after wave followed it, totaling some 45 million people (as many as 4 million coming to New York), a growing proportion of them unskilled and lacking even high school educations. And they keep coming, about 1.8 million immigrants annually—legal and illegal, permanent and temporary—more than 100,000 of them to New York.

The city they reach today, very different from the New York of the 1970s, is the product of several decades of reform that have reversed some of that era's problems and made Gotham shine again. Property values are soaring, vacancies are lower, and abandoned buildings are a smaller problem than is finding vacant land for new construction. Other cities that are traditional immigrant magnets, notably Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, have seen similar improvements.

Yet all of these locales are still plagued by high levels of out-migration—that is, by a continued flow of native-born residents out of town. And many of those leaving today are the very

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people who compete directly with today's unskilled immigrants in the workforce. Demographer William Frey's 2002 analysis of the migration patterns in four immigrant-magnet cities—Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco—concluded that the highest rates of out-migration occur among adults without high school educations, exactly the demographic profile of most immigrants entering those cities. More recent domestic migration data, from the 2005 American Community Survey, also suggest a great migration of the unskilled out of immigrant-saturated cities. The ACS data show that those without high school educations, those who are unemployed, and those who work in industries heavily populated by immigrants are far more likely to be on the move than the average American.

No doubt part of the explanation for such migration is the impact of unskilled immigrant workers on blacks and native-born Hispanics, disproportionately represented in cities. A study by immigration's leading economist, Harvard's George Borjas, calculates that immigration has reduced the wages of blacks and lowered the black employment rate in America. Blacks themselves see the link between their employment struggles and immigration. A Pew Research Center poll found that 58 percent of blacks in Chicago believe that illegal immigrants take jobs and housing from U.S. citizens.

The media in most big cities simply ignore such studies. A recent *New York Times* story on Gotham's black population, which is declining for the first time since the Civil War, speculated at length about the reasons for the drop-off but said nothing about immigration, despite the compelling evidence that it accounts for at least some of the flight out of New York.

Given what we now know about low-wage immigration and cities, one could write a story about the influence of proposed changes in U.S. immigration policy on New York—or Chicago, or Los Angeles—quite different from the one peddled in the press. This story would suggest that a new, skills-based immigration system would relieve some of the pressure that the city's native-born, low-wage workers regularly face and might slow their move out of the city; that the entry of more skilled workers could benefit the knowledge-based economy of New York; and that the arrival of more workers with higher education levels and better language skills would encourage faster economic and cultural assimilation and put less demand on the city's social services, used increasingly by legal and illegal immigrants.

For New Yorkers—who continue to be fed the myth of the essential immigrant—that might be a startling story to read.

—*Steven Malanga*

Four Score and Seven Manatees Ago

Why have we stopped naming schools after great public figures?

A public school's name conveys to students our priorities about the values that they should emulate. Traditionally, Americans, working through their school boards, named public schools after presidents, founding figures, or other leaders, whose accomplishments could serve as models for young citizens. But according to our analysis of recent trends in school names, it's increasingly rare for public schools to have the names of presidents, or even people. Instead, they increasingly take the names of natural features, such as hills, lakes, or animals.

In Arizona, for example, 9 percent of schools built before 1948 honored presidents in their names. Among schools built in the last two decades, however, only 1 percent were named for presidents, while the fraction of schools named for natural features increased from 13 percent before 1948 to 50 percent since 1988. A new school in Arizona is almost 50 times more likely to have the name of something like a cactus or a mesa than of a leader of the free world. We've reached the point where as many Arizona schools are named after the roadrunner bird as after Thomas Jefferson. Beep-beep!

The situation is no different in Florida, where currently only five of the state's nearly 3,000 public schools bear George Washington's name, while 11 are named after manatees (three, admittedly, in Manatee County). In total, 59 Florida

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schools are named for presidents, compared with 155 for lakes, 91 for woods, and 57 for hills. The fraction of schools named for natural features has nearly doubled in the last five decades, from 19 percent to 37 percent, while those named after presidents have declined from 7 percent to less than 1 percent.

In fact, this pattern shows up all over the country. In Minnesota, the fraction of public schools named for presidents dropped from 14 percent of schools built more than 50 years ago to 3 percent of schools built in the last decade. Meanwhile, schools named for natural features almost tripled, from 11 percent of those built before 1956 to 31 percent of those built since 1996. Even in historic Massachusetts, only one "Adams" school exists, honoring native sons John and John Quincy Adams, out of almost 1,800 public schools.

The increasing prominence of social activism and multiculturalism makes it surprising that more schools aren't named after contemporary social activists or ethnic heroes. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s name adorns only 121 out of almost 100,000 public schools nationwide. While it's striking that there are 45 "César Chávez" public schools and only 37 "Harry Truman" schools, the general trend shows a decline in public schools' taking the names of people, period. Florida schools taking people's names declined from 44 percent of those built more than 50 years ago to about 26 percent of schools opened in the last decade. In New Jersey, almost half of the schools built more than 60 years ago were named for people, compared with about one-quarter of schools built in the last two decades.

Why are schools increasingly likely to bear the names of trees, rivers, or birds, instead of politicians, educators, or explorers? One reason is that naming schools after people often provokes a conflict: Are the honorees worthy of emulation? Naming them after natural features, by contrast, is generally inoffensive. After all, who doesn't love manatees? The political coalitions governing public schools are increasingly reluctant to expend political capital fighting over school names.

Unfortunately, such caution betrays public education's civic mission. To teach civics effectively, we have to affirm that democracy and liberty are superior to other systems of government and that the history of democratic societies—shaped by the leadership of people whose names we should know—reinforces this point. If we can't agree on a school name less innocuous than a creek, what are the odds that schools will teach, say, the importance of the Founders or take a stand on the virtues of liberty?

Recent evidence confirms that schools are falling short in this key department. According to a survey by the Knight Foundation, 42 percent of high school teachers reported that schools did a poor to fair job of teaching students about First Amendment freedoms. On the U.S. Department of Education's 2006 assessment of civics knowledge, only 27 percent of 12th-graders demonstrated proficiency, and one-third scored below the "basic" level. More than a third of 12th-graders didn't know that the First Amendment protects freedom of worship.

America built its public education system on the belief that public control and operation of schools would help ensure healthy civic values. Unfortunately, groups more concerned with the next salary negotiation than with civic values tend to dominate local school boards, which are selected in low-turnout elections. Obviously, we aren't going to restore the civic mission of public education simply by renaming a bunch of schools after presidents. But the names given to schools reflect our priorities as much as they shape our values. We should pay attention to the naming of public schools the way we'd pay attention to the canary in a coal mine. When we're naming more schools after birds than after presidents, something is amiss.

—*Jay P. Greene, Brian Kisida, and Jonathan Butcher*

Time Out Londonistan

A modest proposal, or a radical plot?

In the week in which it was reported that Mohammed is now the second most popular name for boys born in Britain, and will probably soon be the most popular, the magazine *Time Out London*

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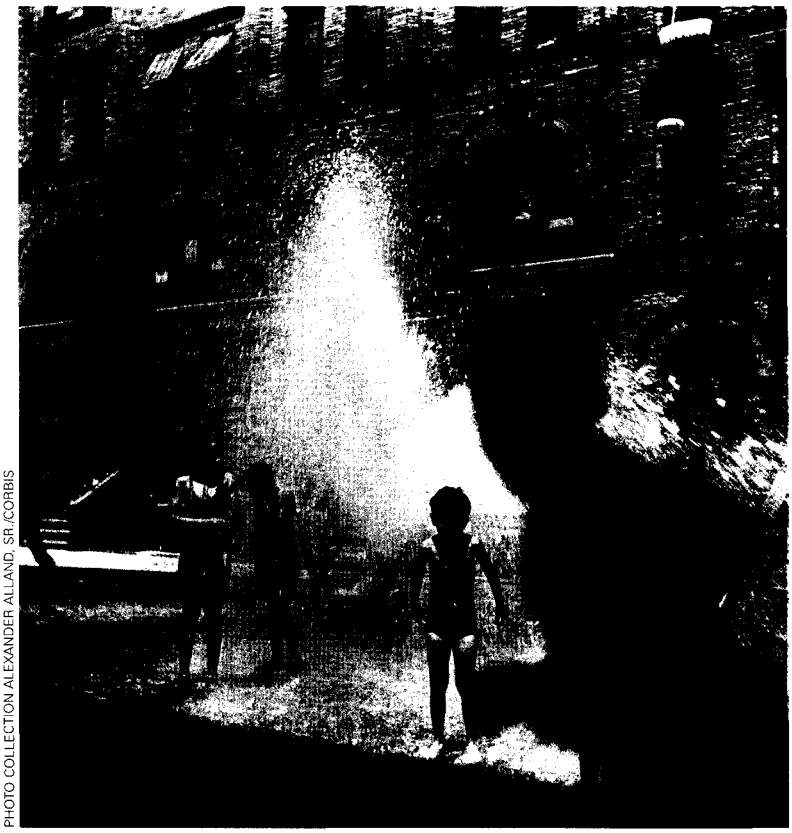
published an article by Michael Hodges suggesting that the total Islamization of the city would bring many advantages.

Time Out has long prided itself on being edgy, hip, and fearless, so the fact that it might be a somewhat slimmer publication under a new Islamic dispensation did not seem to worry it unduly. The author, after all, was only being fashionably transgressive in his article, probably satirical; the fact that his words might be taken seriously in the wrong quarters was of no account to him. Further, he did not stop to think what effect they might have on Hindus and Sikhs, of whom there are large numbers in London, and for whom a joke about an Islamic takeover would not be so amusing.



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Opinion is divided as to whether Hodges's article was, in fact, merely satirical. I think that it was: his suggestion that regular Islamic prayer would lessen osteoarthritis points to satire, as does his proposed transformation of pubs into juice bars, to the great benefit of public health. His eulogy of zakat, the Muslim 2.5 percent tax earmarked for the poor, could be taken as a plea for lower taxes, since all social democracies exact far higher taxes for the purpose.

The problem with deciding whether the article is purely satirical or not is that it so exactly reproduces some of the Islamists' claims. Here, for example, it lauds Muslim race relations: "Under Islam all ethnicities are equal. Once you have submitted to Allah you are a Muslim—it doesn't matter what color you are. End of story." This is about as accurate a depiction of the actual situation in Muslim countries as the old Communist claim that everyone was economically equal in the Soviet Union. But it is a claim that Islamists make nevertheless, and the gullible often believe it.

A satire fails if people do not realize that it is a satire. No one would mistake Swift's *A Modest Proposal* or *Directions to Servants* for serious suggestions as to how to defeat Irish poverty or run a household properly. But if the blogs are anything to go by, the overwhelming majority of people thought that Hodges was perfectly serious. So many concessions have already been made to Islamism in Britain that joining an irresistible tide might seem a sensible precaution, or an astute positioning for the future. At least one Islamic blogger from Britain congratulated Hodges for his bravery in saying what so few of his compatriots would say: that what Britain needs, in common with the rest of the world, is Islam. And the magazine itself did not make the intention of the author any easier to decipher by placing it among other, less provocative articles about Islam in London.

So is London's future Islamic? I do not think so, even if Mohammed does become the commonest British name. Islamism's intellectual resources are so slight as to be negligible, and its pretensions ridiculous. To state its claims is to refute them: perhaps that was Hodges's intention.

—*Theodore Dalrymple*

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In the Heart of Freedom, in Chains

Elite hypocrisy, gangsta culture, and failure in black America

Myron Magnet

Two April days threw a clarifying light on the state of race in America. On the 11th, North Carolina's attorney general exonerated three white Duke students of the rape charges that a black stripper had lodged with much press fanfare a year earlier. The next day, CBS fired shock jock Don Imus for calling black Rutgers women's basketball players "nappy-headed hos." Between them, these events suggest an explanation for America's most vexed social question: in a country whose chief domestic imperative for 50 years has been ending racism and righting long-standing wrongs against blacks—with such success that we now have an expanding black middle class, a black secretary of state, black CEOs of three top corporations, a black Supreme Court justice, and a serious black presidential candidate—how can there still exist a large black urban underclass imprisoned in poverty, welfare dependency, school failure, nonwork, and crime? How even today can more black young men be entangled in the criminal-justice system than graduate from college? How can close to 70 percent of black children be born into single-mother families, which (almost all experts agree) prepare kids for success less well than two-parent families?

The legacy of slavery and racism isn't the reason, economist Thomas Sowell has long argued. That legacy didn't stop blacks from raising themselves up after Emancipation. By World War I, Sowell's data show, northern blacks scored higher on armed-forces tests than southern whites. After World War II and the GI Bill, black education and income levels rose sharply. It was only in the mid-1960s that a century of black progress seemed to make a sudden U-turn, a reversal that long-past events didn't cause. Beginning around 1964, the rates of black high school graduation, workforce participation, crime, illegitimacy, and drug use all turned sharply in the wrong direction. While many blacks continued to move forward, a sizable minority solidified into an underclass, defined by self-destructive behavior that all but guaranteed failure.

What was going on in the mid-sixties that could explain such a startling development? Political scientist Charles Murray gave the first answer to that question: welfare benefits sharply rose just at that moment. Offering more purchasing power than a minimum-wage job, the dole, he argued, provided an economic incentive for women to have out-of-wedlock babies and for their boyfriends to live off their welfare payments, too.

"Ya got to control your ho," says Snoop Dogg, summing up gangsta rap's misogyny.

STEPHEN STICKLER/CORBIS OUTLINE

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A decade after Murray, I suggested that, though welfare was part of the answer, the real explanation was larger. It was cultural, not economic. Begun by the elites, vast changes reshaped mainstream attitudes in the 1960s. Sex became fine outside marriage, and illegitimacy lost its stigma. Drugs were cool; social authority and tradition weren't. America was deemed a racist, unjust society that victimized and impoverished blacks, who could rarely better their condition and who therefore deserved generous welfare benefits as reparations for past and present oppression. If blacks committed crime, the system that drove them to it, out of poverty or as an act of protest, was at fault: we shouldn't blame the victim, as the saying went—meaning the poor criminal, not his prey. Since people shape their actions according to the ideas and beliefs they hold, when these new attitudes reached the inner cities, what could result but an epidemic of social dysfunction?

What the Duke "rape" case shows is that these attitudes about race have hardened into dogma among elites. Otherwise, who would believe for long the fishy charges of accuser Crystal Mangum, then 27, who kept changing her story about how many Duke students had assaulted her, what they looked like, and what they had done? Hired as a stripper for a lacrosse-team party (where she turned up "passed-out drunk," a cop on the scene reported), the unmarried mother of two claimed that she'd been raped, beaten, robbed, and threatened with violation with a broomstick, by three or five or maybe even 20 members of the Duke team, though she picked out different young men from different arrays of police photos. Or maybe she hadn't been raped but only assaulted—or perhaps suspended in midair and used sexually by three young men at once, in a tiny bathroom. State attorney general Roy Cooper understandably suspected that Mangum might have had a tenuous grasp on reality. "She may actually believe the many different stories that she has been telling," the AG remarked, in declaring the students innocent. "You can't piece it together."

It's clear why Durham DA Michael Nifong, facing a desperate reelection fight, would at first have viewed the case as a political godsend in a 40 percent black district. Here was his chance to step forth as champion of a black victim of privileged whites. But early on, he learned that, yes, his hired testing lab had found DNA from several men on Mangum—but none of it belonged to the accused. He let the lab withhold that fact for nine long months. No wonder he was disbarred and resigned in June.

But what led the Duke faculty and officials, along with the mainstream media, to treat this cock-and-bull story as gospel to the bitter end? Why did the university promptly suspend the three students, cancel the rest of the lacrosse season, and force out the coach? Why did president Richard Brodhead say, just after police arrested the trio, "If our students did what is alleged, it is appalling to the worst degree. If they didn't do it, whatever they did is bad enough"? As a lacrosse player recently told the student newspaper: "It was unfortunate that some of the subsequent actions that were taken by the University didn't really imply a presumption of innocence."

After all, this isn't even the first such hoax. It's like a rerun of a notorious farce of two decades ago, when 15-year-old Tawana Brawley turned up in a black plastic garbage bag, her clothes torn, her body smeared with dog feces and scrawled in charcoal with a racial slur. Her charge that white men, including a county prosecutor, had done this after raping her proved sheer falsehood, perhaps cooked up to explain her four-day disappearance to her hot-tempered stepfather. As her spokesman, Al Sharpton first won national notoriety by stirring up the case into a huge media circus; he subsequently had to pay $65,000 for slandering the county prosecutor.

Part of what a university should teach is the critical reasoning power to analyze situations like these, with claims and counterclaims, and determine what actually happened. But the last few decades' transformation of the academic worldview unfitted Duke administrators and faculty from making such a judgment. Like the

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scientists Swift's Gulliver met in the kingdom of Laputa, they have one eye that looks inward at themselves and one eye that peers outward toward the farthest heavens, leaving no organ to perceive the reality right in front of their noses—the reality that, as George Orwell says, takes a constant struggle to see through the fog of orthodoxy.

Even for the clear-sighted, that reality takes an effort to discern, because we see the world not in an unmediated way but through the prism of our culture (and even of our class or subgroup), which can both clarify and distort. In the act of observing, we also interpret and judge, according to the terms of our culture's values, morals, and manners. Our power of reason has limits, so that we have to depend on aid from education, tradition, belief, on what Edmund Burke called "prejudice"—again, all products of culture, built up from the inherited wisdom and experience and sometimes superstition of mankind.

"Reality takes effort to discern: we see the world not in an unmediated way but through the prism of our culture."

Critical reason's task is to peer through the cultural web in which we are enmeshed to perceive clearly the reality that actually exists, including the man-made reality of the social order, whose terms give our lives meaning. We have to question our culturally created assumptions to clear away attitudinizing or propaganda or superstitious prejudice. But the professors sidestep this challenge, simplifying and flattening these complex truths about culture and consciousness. They reach the false conclusion that all descriptions of society and our nature are not just colored or refracted by our cultural assumptions but are mere propaganda, aimed at convincing others that the world is as our class or subgroup wishes it to be. Moreover, since the profs believe that not just the social order but also what we take to be "human nature" is man-made, whoever wins the propaganda battle gets to mold society and human nature—human reality itself—into the shape he chooses.

From these assumptions flows academe's well-known mania for unmasking Western civilization (including its literature and art) as a machine for oppressing the nonwhite, non-rich, and non-male. This worldview—which grants its adherents a sense of superiority over their supposedly racist and sexist fellow men and also a belief in their own special power to remake the world by their words—appears so self-evident on campus as to be impervious to such realities as accelerating black success, for example, or the crowding out of male students by female ones on college campuses themselves.

But woe betide any apostasy from this dogma, as witness the fate of Lawrence Summers, fired as Harvard's president for impiety about both race and "gender." Not only did he suggest that African-American studies professor Cornel West ought to do a little real academic work, but he intensified the outrage by hinting that the reason great male mathematicians far outnumber female ones might—only *might*—have to do with differences in innate ability rather than with inequities in schooling.

Even earlier in Summers's reign, another break with orthodoxy took place: in 2002, Harvard tightened its rules of evidence for charging someone with sexual assault, since the year before the faculty disciplinary board had found six of the seven such cases baseless. By contrast, most university sexual harassment codes seem to assume that male students will assault, that female students won't make up accusations in so credulous an atmosphere, and that the accused is guilty until proven otherwise. In this spirit, for instance, Columbia doesn't give accused students the right to cross-examine witnesses or even to be present to hear them.

So not only did many Duke professors feel that they didn't have to think twice when stripper Mangum filed her charges; they scarcely had to

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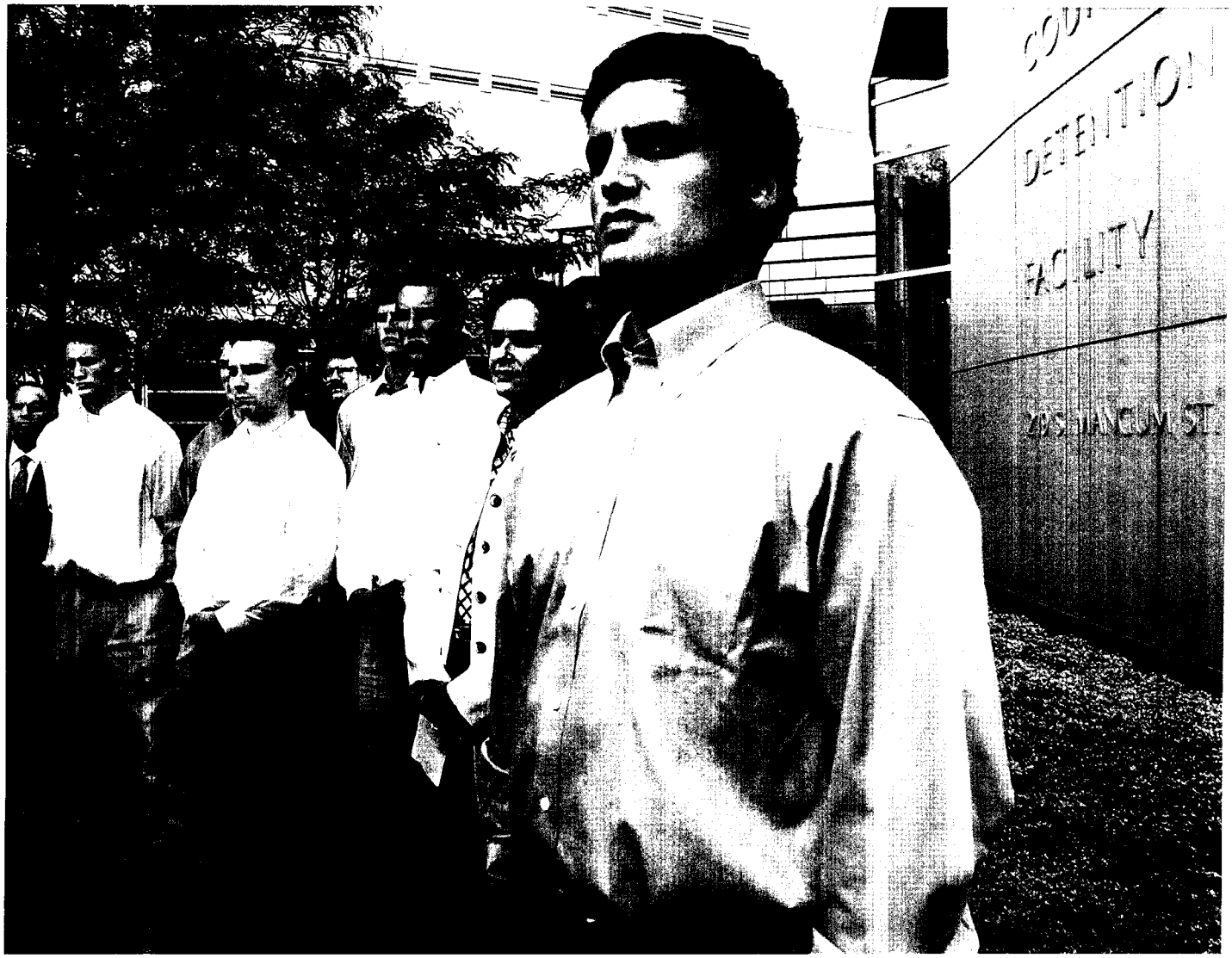

Accepting the dubious accusations of a black stripper, Duke faculty rushed to condemn David Evans and other white members of the school's lacrosse team.

think once. With one eye looking inward and the other fixed on the heavens, they knew instantly what *must have* happened. There was triple-plated presumption of the athletes' guilt: they were, as a Duke literature prof wrote online, "exemplars of the upper end of the class hierarchy"—having doubtless learned lacrosse at fancy prep schools—"the politically dominant race and ethnicity, the dominant gender, the dominant sexuality, and the dominant social group on campus." Mangum was black, poor, and female—trebly a victim. "How many more people of color must fall victim to violent, white, male, athletic privilege?" English prof Houston Baker wailed. We speak metaphorically of mining companies' "raping" the landscape or empires' "raping" their colonies: here was the metaphor made flesh.

In the school paper three weeks after the event, 88 Duke faculty members took out a full-page ad whose circularity of reasoning would have done Swift's Laputan academicians proud. Headlined WHAT DOES A SOCIAL DISASTER SOUND LIKE?, the ad used the Mangum affair to stoke campus race and sex paranoia, and used the paranoia to insinuate that Mangum's charges were likely to be true. Quoting an array of Duke kids' remarks, the ad proclaimed: "These students are shouting and whispering about what happened to this young woman and to themselves." And what do the kids say? "We want the absence of terror. But we don't really know what that means. We can't think. That's why we're so silent. . . . Terror robs you of language and you need language for the healing to begin."

What to make of such almost comically irrational terror-without-a-name that the profs have stirred up with their specters of racists and sexists, like the nonexistent witches of old? Given the mass hysteria at this supposed seat of reason, the accused trio can probably count themselves

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lucky that they lost only a year of their lives. Indeed, only recently some of the 88 professors told the student newspaper that they still stood by the ad, while chemistry prof Steven Baldwin, an early critic of the administration response, mused, "I just wonder what Nifong would have done if he thought that the things he was doing were, in fact, not supported by the University."

The press, as Charlotte Allen wrote in the *Weekly Standard*, amplified to the general public the keynote that the professors set. Were they not college grads, too—humanities majors—fitted out with the approved elite worldview, which it's hard to avoid even if, like most young people, you've chosen your school not for educational reasons but for career and status ones? The case, according to a sprawling page one *New York Times* story the month after the event, was "yet another painful chapter in the tangled American opera of race, sex and privilege," and that same month a *Times* op-ed agonized, "When the children of privilege feel vividly alive only while victimizing, even torturing, we must all ask why." A *Washington Post* columnist struck a note that many other journalists echoed: "The Duke case is in some ways reminiscent of a black woman's vulnerability to a white man during the days of slavery, reconstruction and Jim Crow, when sex was used as a tool of racial domination." A *USA Today* columnist invoked "gender, race and the notion of athletic entitlement and privilege" to explain the case, while a CBS commentator opined, "The collisions are epic: black and white, town and gown, rich and poor, privilege and plain, jocks and scholars."

Pure fantasy. For all the hyperventilating—including ex-dean of the Duke faculty William Chafe's invoking the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till, just turned 14, for allegedly whistling at a white woman in Mississippi—the rape never happened. Emmett Till outrages are long over in America.

"As many pundits noted, Imus's 'nappy-headed hos' is not the language of white racism but the jargon of rap."

What does happen is the kind of thing Don Imus did—a nasty racist crack, hurtful and deplorable but not deadly and not symptomatic of a society that excludes blacks. Moreover, for nearly half a century, whites who think themselves decent haven't said such things and have scorned those who did. In most of America today, what remains are the vestiges of racism, not racism itself. "It's like weight loss," remarked actor D. L. Hughley, who is black. "The last few pounds are the hardest to get rid of. It's the last vestiges of racism that are hard to get rid of."

But as many pundits noted, Imus's "nappy-headed hos" is not the language of white racism but the jargon of rap music. As bad as Imus's crack is, what's important about it is that it highlights the real problem facing black Americans today, and more particularly those in the inner city: it is not Imus's smart-aleck racism but rather the African-American worldview that the rap music Imus quoted reflects and disseminates. Through the window that rap opens into contemporary ghetto culture, we can see that the attitudes that first created the underclass have hardened into stone.

Since *City Journal* still gets letters arguing with a hip-hop story we published four years ago, let me start with a disclaimer. I know that rap's house has many mansions—there is even Christian rap—and I believe that some rap varieties are constructive. I know that nice kids listen to nasty music and remain uncorrupted. And I know that an old (if not yet dead) white male who thinks rock and roll died when Buddy Holly went down in a 1959 plane crash with Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper is rushing into terra incognita in discussing this topic. But I also know that most of the rap that the wider world knows is gangsta rap, and to read the lyrics, listen to the songs, and watch the videos of some of the most popular rap songs is instructive, diagnostic, and disturbing.

SARA D. DAVIS/GETTY IMAGES

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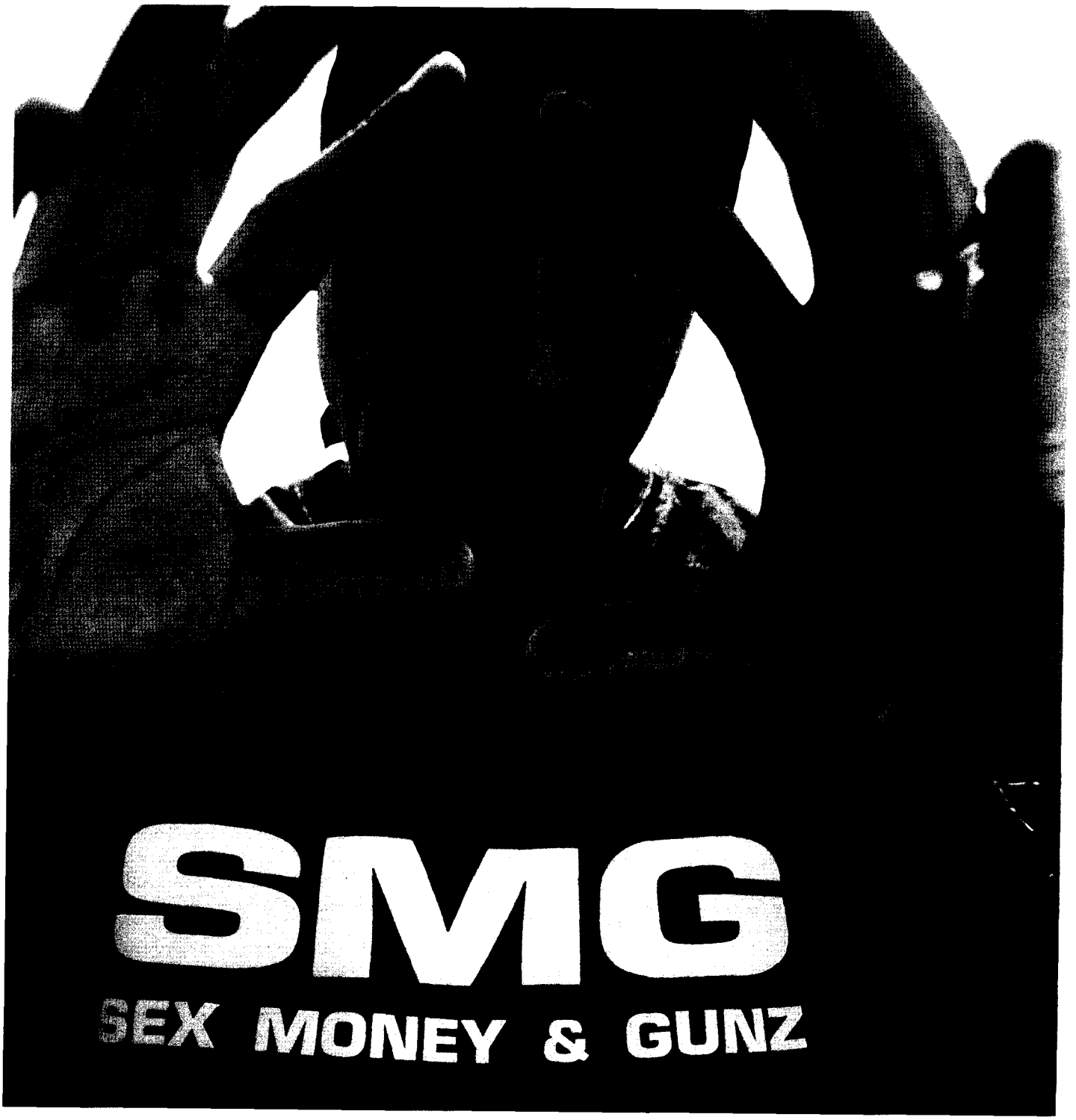

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One of the earliest and certainly most dramatic responses among black Americans to mainstream culture's new narrative of black victimhood in the 1960s was angry confrontation and resistance. Its watchword was "black power"—armed and militant. One of the era's iconic images is Black Panther Huey Newton glowering on a wicker throne, in his leather jacket and commando beret, brandishing a rifle and a spear. As it turned out, behind their political rhetoric, the Panthers were simply gangsters, their resistance mere criminality. Yet mainstream culture's willingness at that time to see even in crime a manly and understandable, if misguided, gesture of revolt against an oppressive system invested a sordid reality with a grain of existential glamour.

"There are no more Emmett Tills, but according to gangsta rap, the system is still victimizing blacks."

So now we have rap's hero, the gangsta, a ritualized, almost parodic descendant of mainstream culture's four-decade-old vision of the ghetto *homme revolté*. One of the first notorious gangsta rap songs, "Cop Killer" of 15 years ago, set the theme that's still gangsta rap's keynote. There are no more Emmett Tills, racism is shriveling up, but according to gangsta rap, echoing today's racial arsonists and extortionists, the system is still victimizing blacks, through the police. Did they not savagely beat Rodney King in Los Angeles?

The gangsta resists. Sings Ice-T in "Cop Killer":

I'm 'bout to bust some shots off.
I'm 'bout to dust some cops off. . . .
I'm a cop killer, better you than me.
Cop killer, fuck police brutality! . . .
Fuck the police, for Rodney King.
Fuck the police, for my dead homeys.
Fuck the police, for your freedom. . . .
Cop killer, but tonight we get even!

In the rap worldview, as it developed, the police actively set out to murder blacks. Did they not murder Amadou Diallo, Patrick Dorismond, Sean Bell, and even Huey Newton himself back in 1989—and to general applause? As Tupac Shakur puts it in "Changes": "Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero." And the song (released two years after the singer's 1996 murder) goes on to accuse racist white society of purposely introducing drugs into the ghetto to destroy blacks, a widespread inner-city paranoid myth (along with the myth that the government intentionally infected the ghetto with AIDS to exterminate black Americans). In fact, Tupac raps, if blacks commit crimes, mainstream society bears the blame for inciting them to do so:

Give the crack to the kids, who the hell cares,
One less hungry mouth on the welfare.
First ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers.
Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other.
It's time to fight back, that's what Huey said.
Two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead.

In a final, diabolical turn, the police then hunt down black youths for dealing the drugs that whites introduced into their community in the first place. "Instead of war on poverty," Tupac charges, "they got a war on drugs, so the police can bother me." And why do cops do this? Tupac asks in "Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z." (1993):

'Cause the police love to break a nigga,
Send 'em upstate cause they straight-up hate the niggaz.

Ice-T's "Cop Killer" ignited controversy in 1992, but its violent message has since become commonplace.

C. TAYLOR CROTHERS/CORBIS

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Later rappers focus their ire on racial profiling, charging the police with purposely harassing blacks out of racist malice. Chamillionaire, in the MTV Best Rap Video of 2006, "Ridin'," describes looking into his rearview mirror and seeing officers smiling with pleasure in the expectation that when they stop him, they're bound to find drugs ("dro"):

A nigga upset for sure 'cause they think
they know that they catchin' me with
plenty of the drink and dro,
So they get behind me tryin' to check
my tags, look at my rearview and
they smilin',
Thinkin' they'll catch me on the wrong,
well keep tryin',
'Cause they denyin' is racial profiling.

But they are wrong to profile him as a criminal:

When they realize I ain't even ridin'
dirty, bet you'll be leavin' with an
even madder mood. . . .
This a message to the laws
tellin' them WE HATE YOU!

Jay-Z, the one irrepressibly witty rapper, also thinks that the cops stopped him because of racial profiling, assuming that any young black is likely to be a criminal. But unfortunately on that occasion he did happen to have drugs ("raw") in his car. He tells the story in "99 Problems," the very funny 2004 MTV Best Rap Video:

The year is '94 and in my trunk is raw,
In my rearview mirror is the
motherfuckin' law.
I got two choices: y'all pull over the car or
Bounce on the devil put the pedal to the floor.

And I heard "Son, do you know why I'm
stoppin' you for?"
'Cause I'm young and I'm black and my
hat's real low?
Do I look like a mind reader sir, I don't know.
Am I under arrest, or should I guess
some mo'?
"Well you was doin' fifty-five in a fifty-four,
License and registration and step out of
the car.
Are you carryin' a weapon on you? I know
a lot of you are. . . ."

Once again, the right response, as Fabolous puts it in "Breathe" (2004), is resistance. Make sure to keep some handguns hidden away:

But I keep the Glocks in the stashes,
Cuz the cops wanna lock and harass us.

Rap's well-known celebration of gangsta behavior is a bad enough message. Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, head of Jazz at Lincoln Center and a ferocious critic of rap, succinctly sums up rap's main story line: "Now you have to say that you're from the streets, you shot some brothers, you went to jail. Rappers have to display the correct pathology." The implicit message, of course, is that the bad environment is to blame for the bad behavior. As Nas puts it in "Hip Hop Is Dead," Number One on the charts last year: "What influenced my raps? Stickups and killings / Kidnappings, project buildings, drug dealings." But add to this celebration of ghetto pathology the cop hatred that is rap's constant leitmotif, and you have a truly toxic brew.

Back when "Cop Killer" came out in 1992, a Warner Music executive defended that anthem in praise of murdering police officers in a letter to the *New York Times* whose self-serving sanctimony the passage of time has not dulled. "Rap music provides a window to our urban culture," the Warner honcho wrote. "To listen to it is to hear from a population desperately in need of attention, slipping headlong into despair and destruction. Almost 30 years ago, Michael Harrington wrote of the other America, the underclass in this country that lives in the shadows of high-rise society. Since then, the gulf between the two Americas has widened to new levels of disproportion. . . . Yet there is music sounding out from this other America, and its message is cautionary, filled with information, warning and, yes, rage. . . . We must

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confront that reality, however it may offend or disturb."

However cynical, there's the sixties' elite orthodoxy at its most extreme: if the disadvantaged black Other America wants to take revenge on its oppressors by killing the cops who are their agents, that's understandable. Rappers (and record companies) are doing the country a favor by warning it what danger bubbles down below, so the mainstream can reform its unjust ways and change the toxic environment before violence erupts. Just the other day, rapper Snoop Dogg offered the same rationalization on Black Entertainment Television: "Without hip-hop, the world wouldn't have understanding of a lot of things that's going on."

"The contemptuous stare, the swagger, the gang-like gestures, all proclaim, Don't mess with me, muthafucka."

Undoubtedly, rap reflects violent resentment churning in the ghetto, though without the political significance that the Warner exec gave it. But it is also a kind of propaganda that molds and amplifies, as well as reflects, attitudes—and molds them with harmony and rhythm's special power to penetrate into the mind, as Plato understood. Rap stokes ghetto kids' anger, while justifying and legitimating it. It even clothes kids in a special uniform (sold by rap moguls Russell Simmons and Sean "Diddy" Coombs, among others), designed to make its wearers look like dangerous "gangstas"—hooded sweatshirt, baggy jeans worn low to display the boxer shorts beneath, big sneakers, do-rag or baseball cap worn gangbanger-style, backward, sideways, or any way but straight. It provides as well a facial expression and a way of carrying yourself, learned from rap videos as well as from the streets: the contemptuous stare, the menacing swagger, the gang-like hand gestures, the aggressive loud voice, all proclaiming, Don't mess with me, muthafucka. And there's the hip-hop lingo, purposely hard for outsiders to penetrate, like Victorian thieves' cant or Cockney rhyming slang. (I'm grateful to raptranslations.com for a clue through the labyrinth.)

Does all this matter? Well, we all see the world through the spectacles of our culture and subgroup; we depend on belief and prejudice to understand our experience; we slip into the manners and rituals of our culture as a way of knowing who we are and how we should behave. Imagine yourself one of the vulnerable kids that rap sings about, born in a project to an uneducated, teen single mother, possibly put into foster care, surrounded by gangs and gangstas, attending an unruly school that teaches—if it teaches anything—that you are a victimized minority in an unjust country that doesn't want you to rise, and that you should nevertheless have high self-esteem because you are fine just as you are. No one gives you a book that opens up the world of possibility beyond your cramped existence. Meanwhile, through the headphones that you always wear pulses the beat of rap, driving out thought and underscoring the message of anger, hatred of the oppressor policeman, and resentful entitlement that the lyrics convey. You go home and watch rap videos on BET. You dress like a gangsta, talk like a gangsta, behave like a gangsta.

And what results? Over 16 percent of black men have been in prison (and 22.4 percent of those between 38 and 42 years old), blacks account for about 40 percent of the nation's entire prison and jail population, and, extrapolating from its 2001 numbers, the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that nearly a third of black men will go to prison during their lifetimes. In New York, home of the nation's largest African-American community, blacks commit 68.5 percent of all the violent crime, Heather Mac Donald calculates, even though they compose only 24 percent of the population. It's hard to argue that poverty explains these numbers, since blacks, 12 percent of the U.S. population, committed 48.5

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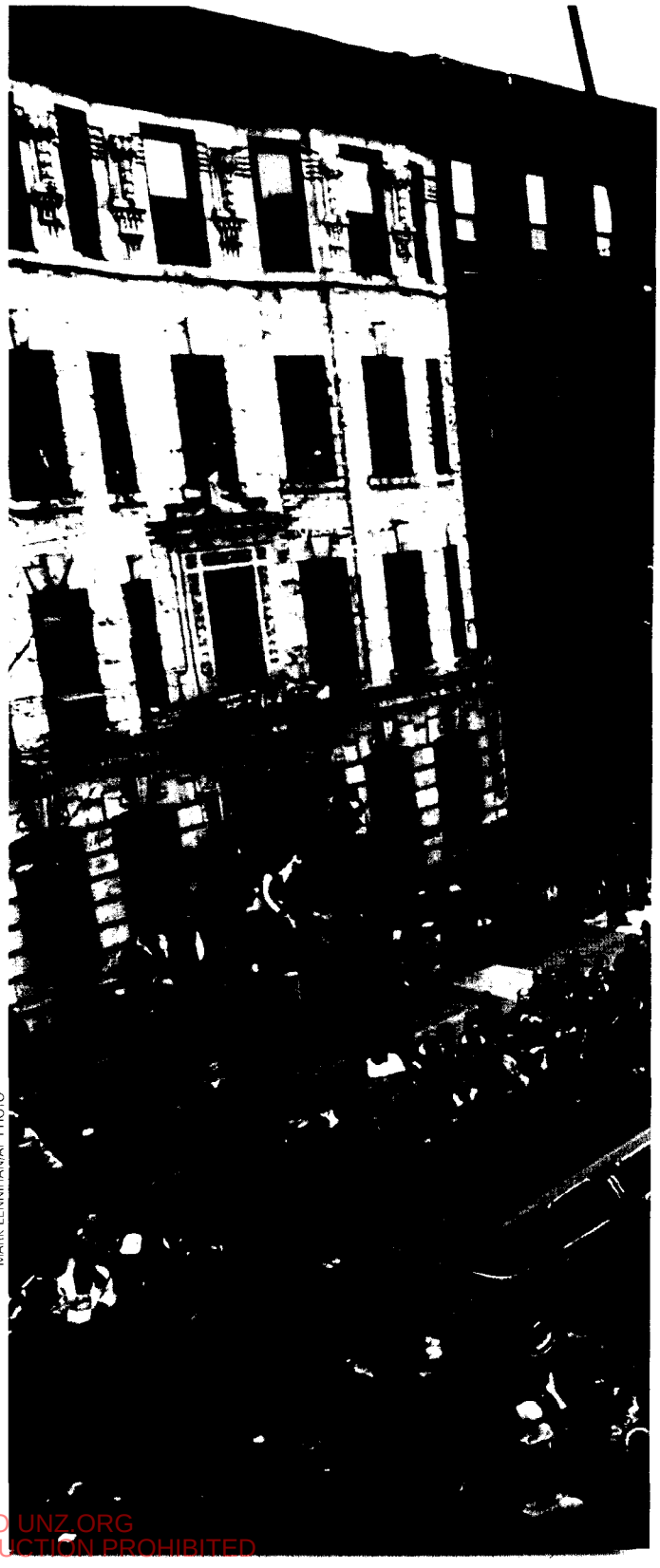
percent of the nation's rapes and sexual assaults in 2005.

Such things grow out of culture—and not just in U.S. inner cities: as Theodore Dalrymple has shown in these pages, similar attitudes among the British elites about class oppression and "social exclusion" have produced a largely white U.K. underclass with its own dysfunctional culture and behavior. In the U.S., rap helps transmit that culture, and it is helping to disseminate the gangsta attitude and the gangsta uniform to resentful youths around the world—to the *racaille* in the Paris *cités*, to the disaffected young men in Africa's urban slums, to British-born Pakistanis listening to Aki Nawaz rapping in praise of suicide bombing.

In ghetto neighborhoods, part of underclass culture is an anti-"snitching" code that stigmatizes any cooperation with the police, even to help them find the murderer of your friend. Rapper Cam'ron told *60 Minutes* that he wouldn't inform the cops if he knew that his next-door neighbor was a serial killer, and in fact he refused to cooperate with police after he himself had been shot and wounded. It would violate his code of ethics, he says, and hurt his business. Even a group of earnest, well-behaved young teens in parochial-school uniforms solemnly told BET that they'd never snitch. Consequently, a criminologist told *60 Minutes*, while the national rate for solving murders is 60 percent, it's in the single digits in many inner-city neighborhoods, in some of which, he says, "we are on the verge of—or maybe we have already lost—the rule of law."

A vicious circle now operates between the gangsta kids and the police. The kids dislike and fear the cops; the cops—looking for suspects whom victims have described as black, or seeing youths dressed as gangstas behaving as if they might be carrying weapons—stop



MARK LENNIHAN/AP PHOTO

Rap has blurred the line between violent performance and violent reality. Here, the Brooklyn funeral procession of Notorious B.I.G., killed in an L.A. drive-by shooting

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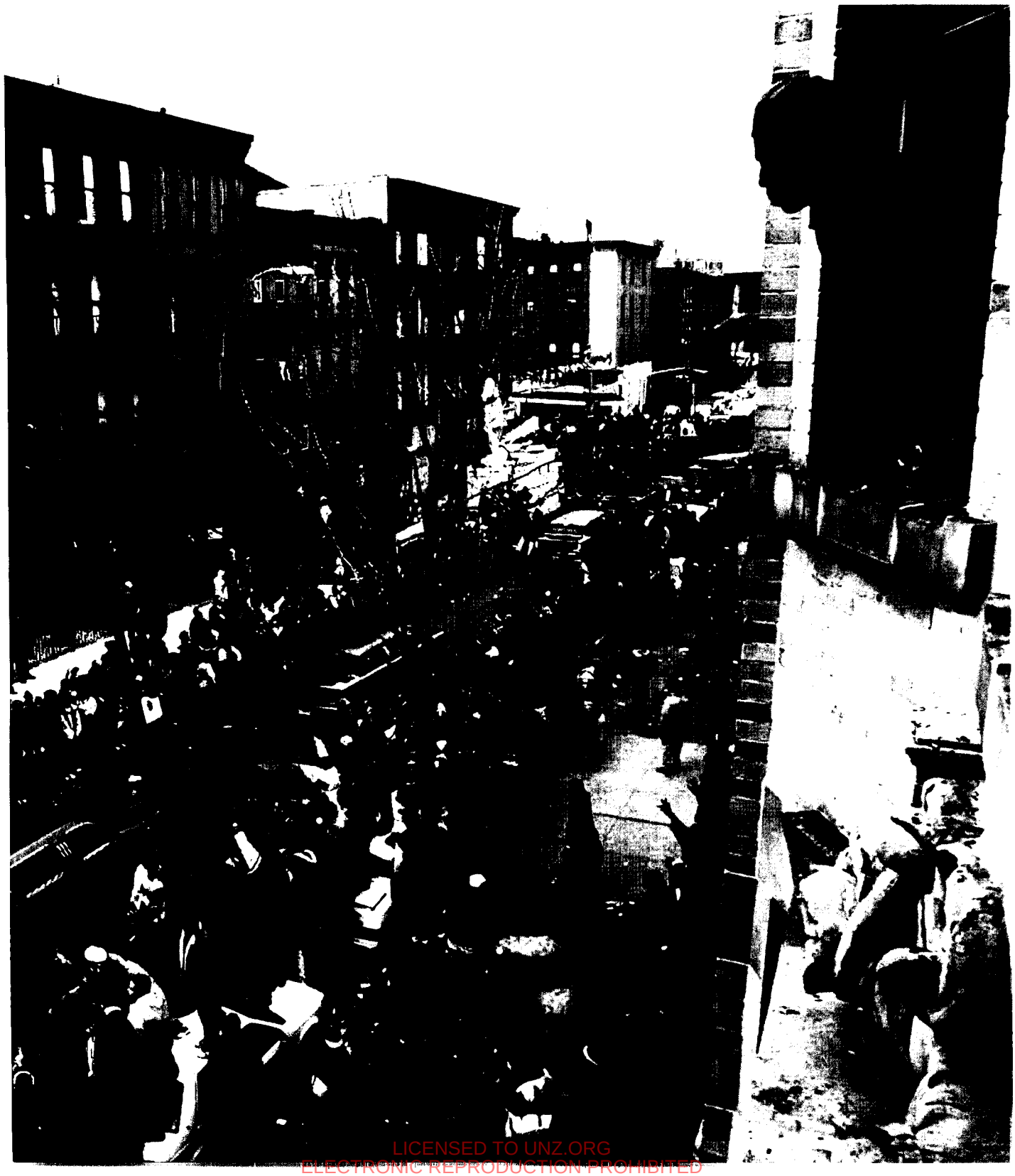

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law-abiding blacks, who then feel all the more victimized, angry, and resentful. And when frightened officers, black or white, mistakenly kill an innocent black man, like Amadou Diallo, such kids—and their mothers and neighbors, who write to *City Journal* often to say so—take it as proof that the cops are out to kill blacks on purpose. "I am scared for my son," one mother wrote us recently. "The police always harassing the wrong people & jumping out of cars spot checking, . . . while the criminals sit around the neighborhood all day. . . . Was 50 shots necessary for Sean Bell? Or 45 shots for Diallo? . . . Come on, we all know none of these situations would ever happen to any white kids." And you understand how she feels.

But one solution, if the mother knows who the real criminals are, is to "snitch." Another, as a former juvenile-court chief prosecutor puts it, is: "If you don't want to be treated like a thug, don't dress like a thug. It's an invitation to 'probable cause.'" After all, urban black culture wasn't always like this. Just look through old photos of Harlem and see young men and women dressed up like fashion plates out of Henry James or Thomas Mann, or like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Look at the black musical celebrities who took such care and made such an impression on people my age: Count Basie, with his elegant mustache, always in a tie and jacket; Duke Ellington, debonair in white tie and jauntily cocked top hat; gorgeous Lena Horne, radiant in her shimmering evening gown—all with the bearing of counts and dukes. What would they make of the gangstas?

The gangsta style, only 15 or so years old, is the malign outward expression of a malign worldview. And it doesn't just get gangsta kids hassled by the police. It can make them unemployable. "When I see a kid with his hat on backwards or sideways, and who gives me the 'attitude,' I don't go on with the rest of the interview," says one big New York grocer of his methods for hiring his mostly minority workforce. The only skill his operation requires of employees, aside from bagging groceries, is showing up and being civil to customers, not giving them "attitude."

Finally, rap's language: the "hos" Imus mentioned, along with the "bitches" and the "niggas," are also outward expressions of a destructive and self-destructive worldview. Christopher Hitchens thinks that African-Americans use "nigga" the way suffragettes adopted their detractors' dismissive name for them as a way of disarming its hurtful power. Perhaps. But I read it as a kind of provocation and reproach: a contradictory combination of *WE can use this word, but we dare whites to try,* and *Whites think they are doing us a big favor by not calling us this, but see how little their puny gesture means to us.* Trouble is, rap music has won many white fans, too, some of whom think it's funny to use the word "nigga."

But calling women "bitches" and "hos" (dialect for "whores")—and rap has almost no other word for woman—is an even more destructive development. Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson explains black Americans' low marriage rate and high illegitimacy rate by saying that too many unskilled black men are "unmarriageable," since the disappearance of well-paid manual labor has deprived them of the means to support wives. He's right that they are unmarriageable, but the reason is not economic but cultural: they are unmarriageable because they have odious attitudes, and therefore odious behavior, toward women, which rap expresses ad nauseam.

Popular music has had risqué lyrics at least since the Victorians sang about "the most immoral lady" who "lay between the lily-white sheets with nothing on at all." Some lyrics are sophisticated, like "Birds do it, bees do it, / Even educated fleas do it." Some are wittily raunchy, like Bessie Smith singing in 1931:

> I wished I had some good man, to tell
> my troubles to;
> Seem like the whole world's wrong,
> since my man's been gone.
> I need a little sugar in my bowl,
> I need a little hot dog on my roll,
> I can stand a bit of lovin', oh so bad. . . .

And certainly the straitlaced have long claimed that lyrics like "Why don't we do it in

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the road" will subvert the whole framework of society.

But in rap you'll find no witty *double entendres*, no playful seductiveness, no risqué flirting. It is hard-core porn—and please be warned that the bad language so far is as nothing compared with what follows. I apologize, but I have to show you the coarseness of the language to convey the coarseness of feeling that is so troubling. What rap has to say about the relations between men and women is basically what Crooked I asks in his song title "Who Wants to Fuck Tonight?"

> **"The gangsta style doesn't just get gangsta kids hassled by the police. It can make them unemployable."**

Now do my niggaz
wanna fuck tonight? Hell yeah.
How many ladies wanna fuck tonight?
We do, we do.

Understand though, Crooked I cautions, it's just sex; it has nothing to do with marriage:

I'm tellin' hos ain't no holy matrimony,
Just us, fuckin' on the holy mattress only.

In fact, as 50 Cent explains in his hit 2002 song "In da Club," it has nothing to do with love, either:

I'm into having sex, I ain't into making love.
So come give me a hug if you're into
getting rubbed.

What that leaves to rap about is mechanics. Petey Pablo's "Freek-a-Leek" is representative:

Tell me what you want, do you want
it missionary
With your feet crammed to the headboard?
Do you want it from the back with
your face in the pillow,
So you can yell it loud as you want to?
Do you want it on the floor? Do you want
it on the chair?
Do you want it over here? Do you want
it over there?
Do you want it in ya pussy? Do you want
it in ya ass?
I'll give you anything you can handle!

Without feelings other than lust, relations are impersonal and narcissistic. So while it's good to have a good-looking woman—and rappers go on in considerable detail about what they like (often tall, willowy Asian- or Hispanic-looking women in the rap videos)—sometimes you have to make do with what's available at the moment. "If she ain't right," Ja Rule advises in the verse he contributes to "Who Wants to Fuck Tonight?," "turn the lights off / Put her on a summit and pump till your dick's soft." But even if "on a one-to-ten she's a certified 20," Usher sings in "Yeah," Ludacris, who sings the song's next verse, says he nevertheless wants to have sex in a way that recurs with disturbing frequency in rap:

I'm a spit the truth, I won't stop till I
get 'em in they birthday suits.
So gimme the rhythm and it'll be off
with they clothes,
Then bend over to the front and touch
your toes.

It's hard to be more impersonal and dehumanizing than to ask a woman to present herself as no more than an orifice. But as one picture is worth a thousand words, take a look at Snoop Doggy Dogg's pornographic cartoon cover for his album *Doggystyle*. Sticking out of a doghouse, we see only the saucily tilted hindquarters of, well . . . it has a tail rigidly

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sticking up, but is otherwise a very well-shaped young woman, the rest of whose body—naturally along with her face, which would show her to be an individual, a person—is covered up. This motif gets even worse in David Banner's 2005 hit "Play," but you'll have to look that one up yourself. It is beyond pornographic.

Of course, if you do have a personal relation with a woman, it is likely to get annoying. Sings Snoop himself:

> This is what you made me do; I really
> didn't want to put hands on you.
> But bitch you playin' with fire.
> I'm so sick and tired of loudmouth
> bitches like you. . . .
> You got to put that bitch in her place,
> even if it's slapping her in her face.
> Ya got to control your ho. Can you
> control your ho?

The Duke profs wanted to know, "What does a social disaster sound like?" It sounds like this.

By contrast, the closest thing to a love song that I came upon in the rap canon is called "I Miss That Bitch." Snoop starts by saying that E. White is going to sing a song "For all the players that lost somebody special / And wonder where she at." And E. White raps:

> Perhaps I went to jail,
> That left us out of touch.
> Shoulda shot some mail or something. . . .
> Baby I really wanna see what you got now.
> I'm all grown up with my shit together.
> I don't know if I'mma see you ever.
> I got a woman and shit, but I must
> admit this:
> You at the top of my list,
> Unforgettable.

It's not much, but by comparison with the organs and positions, it seemed to me like stumbling upon "Night and Day." What E. White feels about his current woman, of course, is her problem.

The great accomplishment of civilization has been to replace the reign of force with the rule of law, and to humanize the animal realities in which our lives are embedded by means of manners and rituals that give those realities a human meaning. And if the rule of law fares poorly in rap, civilization's great effort to transform the animal facts of reproduction into love and marriage doesn't do so well in gangsta-land, either. This is what so much of our culture is about—our manners and morals, poetry and song and film, from the Song of Solomon and the medieval French romances to "The Way You Look Tonight": yes, I have these feelings, but not just for anyone; it's *you* personally I love, so much that I want you always. And many of the popular songs of the 1940s and 1950s, making the promise of permanence explicit, end with talk of marriage. Human beings undergo an education of the feelings, and popular culture's love songs were once great instructors in this school.

It's a long drop to the dogghouse and *Doggystyle*. And since it's culture that molds feelings and behavior, when the "Why don't we do it in the road" spirit of sexual liberation of the 1960s declined in the ghetto into "Do you want it over here? Do you want it over there?," feelings and behavior were bound to follow. Rap is a school that hardens and coarsens rather than cultivates the feelings and, presenting women as disposable and interchangeable objects for use, dehumanizes rather than humanizes the relations between the sexes.

While middle-class people, black and white, have other cultural influences—including loving, caring families, helpful in cultivating a child's capacity to love—to counteract the dogghouse, the most vulnerable don't. And while, of course, people do fall in love in the inner cities, it's not enough to preempt the attitudes that, as Kay S. Hymowitz has shown, lead ghetto girls onto the "teen-mommy track": that you can't count on men, that they're such animals that nobody needs or wants one around the house, that using them to get pregnant without expecting them to be fathers to your children is normal and fine. The men won't love you, but the baby will—an expectation so often disappointed, with tragic results for the baby and society.

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Rap didn't cause this, but it doesn't merely reflect it, either, just as it doesn't merely reflect ghetto lawlessness. It is part of a culture that reinforces, normalizes, and perpetuates a self-destructive, pathological way of life. So if we want to bring the inner-city underclass into the mainstream, we have an immense work of cultural reconstruction ahead of us, of which recognizing the damage that gangsta rap does, and stigmatizing gangsta rappers and their record companies for doing it, is only one part. Chrysler should stop featuring Snoop Dogg in its ads; Mrs. Clinton should stop letting rappers like Timbaland host fund-raisers for her, just as her husband long ago rejected rapper Sister Souljah's support after she suggested that blacks should kill whites; and the entire nation needs what's come to be called a Sister Souljah moment, ostracizing rap stars instead of glorifying them.

"The entire nation needs a Sister Souljah moment, ostracizing rap stars instead of glorifying them."

Wynton Marsalis's scathing critique of rap understands how hip-hop relates to the larger problem. Leaving aside the lyrics, rap is musically "ignorant," Marsalis says. "Rhythms have to have a meaning. If the rhythm is corrupt, the music is corrupt and the people become corrupt." (And, one might add, rap also subverts music's aim of creating a realm of harmony and beauty.) As for the lyrics, Marsalis says, "I call it 'ghetto minstrelsy.' Old-school minstrels used to say they were 'real darkies from the real plantation.' Hip-hop substitutes the streets for the plantation." In its conception of black authenticity, rap perfectly embodies the cultural tragedy of the ghetto underclass. As Marsalis puts it in the title of a 2006 song, when you look at the underclass, it seems that all the progress blacks have made is to go "from the plantation to the penitentiary" and to be, as the song puts it, "in the heart of freedom . . . in chains."

Those chains are not only the chains that bind prisoners but also what the poet William Blake called "mind forg'd manacles"—beliefs, attitudes, and habits of feeling that imprison you even when you are outwardly free. For the underclass, those manacles are the beliefs that they're victims, that they're entitled to be angry and resentful, that the law is an oppression, that the larger community owes them a living, that education is useless, that sex is without responsibility or even emotion, that they're not responsible for supporting and nurturing their children, and that because they're victims they never need to be ashamed of anything they do.

The most positive development I know came when Bill Cosby addressed the NAACP on the 50th anniversary of the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* desegregation decision and spoke the truth that people like Jesse Jackson, glaring at him from the next chair, try to suppress and stigmatize as racist. "The lower economic and lower middle economic people are not holding their end in this deal," Cosby said. "In the neighborhood that most of us grew up in, parenting is not going on. . . . People in jail, and women having children by five, six different men. . . . We've got to take the neighborhood back. . . . It's not what they're doing to us. It's what we're not doing . . . . All of these people . . . they've got to be wondering what the hell happened. *Brown* v. *Board of Education*—these people who marched and were hit in the face with rocks and punched in the face to get an education, and we got these knuckleheads walking around who don't want to learn English. . . . Well, *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, where are we today? . . . What did we do with it? . . . . Fifty percent drop out—rest of them in prison. . . . You have the pileup of these sweet beautiful things born by nature—raised by no one."

Blacks need to heed this message, and whites need to stop telling them anything different.

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On the Front Line in the War on Terrorism

Cops in New York and Los Angeles offer America two models for preventing another 9/11.

MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

New York's in-your-face shows of force are meant to convince terrorists that the city is too tough a target.

Judith Miller

Three time zones, 3,000 miles, and a cultural galaxy apart, New York and Los Angeles face a common threat: along with Washington, D.C., they're the chief American targets of Islamic terror. And both cities boast top cops, sometime rivals—the cities are fiercely competitive—who know that ensuring that a dog doesn't bark will determine their legacies. After investing millions of dollars in homeland security, Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly of New York and Chief William J. Bratton of L.A. can both claim counterterror successes. What can we learn from their approaches? And will they be able to continue preventing terrorist attacks in their cities?

On the face of it, the nation's two biggest metropolitan forces seem to have adopted kindred counterterrorism strategies. Both have roving SWAT or "Emergency Service Unit" teams, equipped with gas masks and antidotes to

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chemical and biological agents. Both have set up "fusion" centers to screen threats and monitor secret intelligence and "open-source" information, including radical Internet sites, and both have started programs to identify and protect likely targets. Both have tried to integrate private security experts into their work. Both conduct surveillance that would have been legally questionable before September 11. Both have sought to enlist support from mainstream Muslims and have encouraged various private firms to report suspicious activity.

Yet despite such similarities, the terror-fighting approaches of New York and L.A., like the cities themselves, reflect very different traditions, styles, and, above all, resources. New York, which knows the price of failure and thus has a heightened "threat perception," sets the gold standard for counterterrorism—and has the funding and manpower to do it. Kelly, 65, views his highest priority as ensuring that al-Qaida doesn't hit the city again. "When your city has been attacked, the threat is always with you," he tells me. Deploying its own informants, undercover terror-busters, and a small army of analysts, New York tries to locate and neutralize pockets of militancy even before potentially violent individuals can form radical cells—a "preventive" approach, as Kelly calls it, that is the most effective way that police departments, small or large, can help fight terror.

In L.A., a city that has never been attacked, terrorism is a less pressing concern than gang violence and other crime. Lacking the political incentive, and hence the resources, to wage his own war on terror, Bratton, 59, has instead pooled scarce funds, manpower, and information with federal and other agencies—an approach that federal officials hold up as a model for police departments that can't afford New York's investment.

Both cities can claim victories that underscore the central role that law enforcement can—and should—play in homeland security. Just this June, the NYPD and the FBI announced that they had foiled a new Islamic terror plot against New York, this time to blow up fuel-tank farms at John F. Kennedy International Airport. While the plot was extremely unlikely to succeed—law enforcement had penetrated it from the start—the arrests revealed that Trinidad and other Caribbean ports have become fertile ground for Islamic militancy. Since September 11, the NYPD has broken up at least seven terror plots. What the LAPD calls its "coming of age" terrorism case—as yet not widely reported—commenced with a concerned landlord's call just days after September 11. It eventually led police investigators to a small group of Islamic militants who may have provided support for the 9/11 hijackers (see box).

Yet neither Kelly nor Bratton can rest on his laurels. Those playing defense must be constantly vigilant, while al-Qaida and like-minded militants need to be lucky only once.

Size matters. The NYPD has long been one of the world's largest law enforcement agencies. On September 11, 2001, it was employing some 50,000 people—36,000 sworn officers and about 14,000 civilians—to protect more than 8 million people. The next five largest U.S. police departments combined don't have as many employees, Bratton ruefully observes. His own adopted city of L.A.—he's originally from Boston—has a civilian and sworn force of 12,800 covering a city of nearly 4 million. As the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a Washington-based think tank, concludes in a new report, the NYPD has the resources "to do things that other departments cannot."

Shortly after taking office under Mayor Michael Bloomberg in January 2002, Kelly began his second tour of duty as Gotham's top cop by drawing on those considerable resources to revamp and expand the NYPD's terror-fighting capabilities. He hired two key counterterrorism deputies from Washington, D.C.: David Cohen, a former deputy director of the CIA's operations wing, to head the NYPD's Intelligence Division; and Michael Sheehan, former State Department head of counterterrorism, to run the force's new Counter Terrorism Bureau. Then he assigned more than 1,000 people to their units, the largest deployment of any American city to combat terrorism. With funds from the Police Foundation, a private group, he also

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Much of the NYPD's recent counterterrorism work, including truck inspection, has focused on New York's financial district, home to 75 of the city's 367 most sensitive sites.

sent liaison officers overseas to work alongside police departments in some of the cities most frequently targeted by terror, including Amman, London, and Singapore.

Each day, the Counter Terrorism Bureau's 205 officers analyze worldwide threats to determine how many officers should deploy where; provide training for all members of the force; assess risks to targets; and develop plans for protecting key sites in and near the city. Much of the NYPD's recent counterterrorism work has focused on the financial district in lower Manhattan, home to 75 of the city's 367 most sensitive sites, information about which is kept in a giant red binder, the "Red Book." Kelly is weighing a plan to erect a "ring of steel"—cameras, random screenings, and sophisticated sensors like those that London installed after its own subway and bus terror attacks in 2005—to help protect the 1.5-square-mile district and its 1 trillion daily financial transactions. The city is also spending $250 million to install cameras in its subway and transit system.

The cutting edge of the NYPD's antiterrorism efforts, though, is David Cohen's Intelligence Division. "We're looking at 'clusters,' at how and where people get together, what they do and where they go, how they raise funds," Kelly says during an interview at One Police Plaza. "This analytical work is not being done anywhere else in government. It's all about prevention."

Before September 11, the Intelligence Division mainly developed intelligence on narcotics and violent crimes, and sought to protect visiting dignitaries to the city—a glorified "escort service," Kelly once scoffed. Now, its personnel devote 95 percent of their time to terrorism investigations, the PERF report concludes (and sources confirm). Kelly says that the division has 23 civilian intelligence analysts, with master's

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degrees and higher from Columbia, Cornell, Harvard, and other universities; some have come from leading think tanks, even from the CIA—giving the force a capability, he says, "that exists no place else." The division's "field intelligence officers," one assigned to each of the NYPD's 76 precincts, keep tabs on people, crimes, and arrests that might have terrorism links. "Core Collection" officers develop confidential informants, who could give early warning about people being radicalized by militant associates or websites.

Cohen's division also supervises undercover agents who infiltrate potentially violent groups. The identities of these covert warriors, and other details of the program, remain fiercely guarded secrets. But information occasionally turns up in federal prosecutions, such as the NYPD's use of an undercover agent in helping to foil the June JFK airport conspiracy, and of both a Bangladeshi undercover officer and an Egyptian-born confidential informant in disrupting a 2004 plot by Islamic terrorists to bomb the Herald Square subway station. "I want at least 1,000 to 2,000 to die in one day," one of the accused told the informant in the subway case, a stunned New York jury heard last year. Though the men had not acquired explosives, police arrested them shortly before the Republican national convention in August 2004, after nearly two years of surveillance. The key plotter, Shahawar Matin Siraj, a 22-year-old Pakistani, recently received a 30-year sentence. "This is the kind of homegrown, lone-wolf case that starts way below federal radar," Cohen says. "But had these two guys acted on their intentions"—to "fuck this country very bad," as Siraj threatened on tape—"a lot of New Yorkers would have died and been injured."

Undercover work capitalizes on the NYPD's 870-plus civilian and uniformed speakers of Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Pashto, Turkish, and Urdu—more linguists than the FBI's New York field office employs. Of the 470 or so in uniform, more than 200 are "master linguists" in high-priority languages. The latest police academy class boasted graduates hailing from 65 countries, Cohen notes. Some will doubtless work for the division's Cyber Intelligence Unit, a 25-person group situated in unmarked headquarters in a Chelsea industrial building; others may wind up in the Prison Intelligence program at Rikers Island, where they will work with officials from probations, the New York State Police, and other agencies to monitor the spread of militancy.

Richard Falkenrath, a counterterrorism expert who worked in the Bush White House and succeeded Deputy Commissioner Sheehan last year, says that New York's intelligence efforts are "awe-inspiring," beyond anything he's seen at the local, state, and even federal levels. "New York is far more action-oriented than the feds," he says, "partly because it's a lot easier and faster to take action." Even rivals like Bratton, who served as New York's police commissioner in the mid-nineties before falling out with his boss, Rudy Giuliani, share the admiration. "The NYPD's intelligence operation is widely regarded as the gold standard," Bratton concluded in an article coauthored for the Manhattan Institute (*City Journal*'s publisher) last fall.

What Bratton criticizes—and he's not alone—is the NYPD's alleged refusal to give other law enforcement agencies access to the intelligence that it has so doggedly gathered. "New York has perfected an array of intelligence-gathering initiatives," he observes. "My concern is that at the federal level, there are too few dots to connect, and in New York, what they collect is not being shared. As a result, law enforcement is not being formed by this information."

Kelly dismisses this as "old criticism." But neither he nor his deputies deny that for years after September 11, relations between the department and the FBI were rancorous. The NYPD blames the strain on FBI resentment of Kelly's creation of what are basically a miniature FBI and CIA within the force. After Kelly tried unsuccessfully to take over the FBI-run Joint Terrorism Task Force—the nation's first alliance between the bureau and local law enforcement, dating back to 1979—he stationed NYPD detectives overseas and authorized Cohen's division to

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conduct its own surveillance and infiltration operations, despite FBI opposition. "For a long while," Cohen says, "their attitude was: 'If you're not under our control, you're out of control.' "

Kelly's view that combating terrorism was "something we have to do ourselves" partly reflected the devastating effect of pre-9/11 intelligence failures on the law enforcement community. Not only did thousands of civilians die on 9/11; the city's fire department lost 343 firefighters—the largest loss of life in one day in history for emergency responders; the Port Authority police suffered 37 deaths, the largest loss of life in one day in history for police; the NYPD itself lost 23 officers, the second-largest loss historically. " 'Trust us' was no longer acceptable after 9/11," observes Sheehan, who is writing a book on counterterrorism, *Crush the Cell*.

"The identities of these covert warriors, and other details of the program, remain fiercely guarded secrets."

Tensions also grew between the FBI and Sheehan's Counter Terrorism Bureau. In the summer of 2003, officials said, the FBI passed an unverified tip to the CTB that a "dirty bomb" might be on its way to New York. When Sheehan called a Friday afternoon meeting to discuss a possible deployment to the city of local, state, and federal investigators, emergency-response personnel, and nuclear-detection technology, the FBI began downplaying the threat. Furious, Kelly, Cohen, and Sheehan decided to use the tip to test the city's emergency-response and intelligence teams in a massive drill. "What we learned from that episode was that when and if we needed federal assets, we were still on our own, even after 9/11," a former senior city official complains.

Relations continued to deteriorate until the FBI replaced its senior leadership in New York in May 2005. Mark Mershon became the new head of the FBI's 2,000-person New York field office (the bureau's largest), and Joseph Demarest, Jr. took over its counterterrorism division. Both determined to repair what they saw as a crucial partnership. A turning point, both sides agree, came in November 2005, when FBI director Robert Mueller III visited the NYPD and had a private sit-down with Kelly. "The director was impressed by New York's programs," Demarest says. Mueller agreed with Kelly that New York was "big enough and enough of a target to warrant some independence," an NYPD official recalled.

The FBI began seeing Cohen's Intelligence Division not as a rival or nuisance but as an additional source of vital intelligence. Mueller also blessed Mershon's desire to make the FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Force, with its 180 FBI and 125 police members, more inclusive. The senior-ranking NYPD official on the task force even became its "comanager." "You get a real buy-in," explains Demarest. "Important decisions are no longer made alone." Cohen adds: "It's hard to overstate how far we've come from the animosity of the early days." He estimates that, though the FBI has the "first right of refusal" on tips and leads—35,000 have come in since the city set up its counterterrorism hotline five years ago—the NYPD has pursued almost two-thirds of them.

NYPD officials insist that the department doesn't deserve its reputation for arrogance and that its counterterrorism programs have always required cooperation with private businesses and other law enforcement agencies. Since launching Operation Nexus in 2002, notes Cohen, the NYPD has visited more than 30,000 businesses in New York and beyond, encouraging them to report suspicious purchases or other potentially terrorism-related activity.

Another initiative, Operation Shield, helps area businesses assess, and revise, security. The program also shares unclassified intelligence and security tips with private security firms. "Shield is all about sharing with the private sector on a real-time basis," Kelly says. "Two days after the

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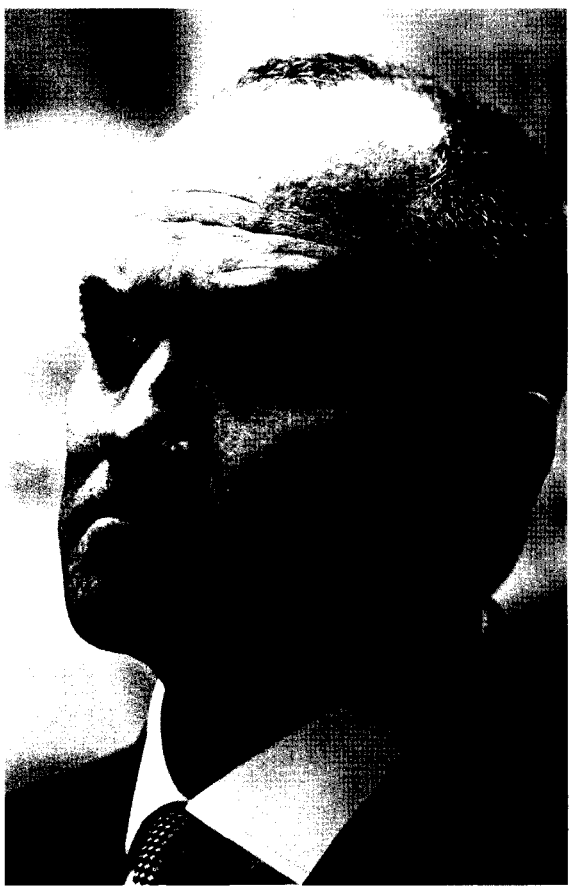
bombings in Mumbai"—the devastating simultaneous bombings of seven trains in India last year that killed over 200 and wounded hundreds more—"our lieutenant did a teleconference from there with 100 Shield members in our pressroom, giving more specifics about the attack than anyone else had." A recent session, with more than 500 in attendance, discussed the chlorine bombs that American forces have faced in Iraq.

New York's "fusion center," the nation's first, now includes counterterrorism reps from approximately 40 local, state, and federal agencies. The NYPD coordinates, too, with the numerous agencies that operate the city's massive public transportation system, with its 6.5 million daily riders. The NYPD protects that system mostly with its own funds, since the federal government has spent only $386 million nationally on transit security—far less than the $24 billion it has spent bolstering aviation security. In 2007, Falkenrath disclosed in March, there had already been 22 subway bomb threats and 31 intelligence leads on subway attack plots.

Despite these outreach efforts, state officials and leaders in other cities still occasionally grumble that the NYPD is reluctant to work with other police departments or, more often, that it neglects to inform them about its operations on their turf. Michael Sheehan, quoting his former colleague Cohen, responds: "There is no such thing as intelligence sharing; there is only intelligence trading." Even small police forces can develop useful tips and leads with the proper skills and a little creativity, he points out; that's why the NYPD has invested considerable resources to train and work with police from the tristate area. "But yes," Sheehan acknowledges, "we prefer to work with people who are seriously in the game—those that run informants and collect real information, rather than just circulate watered-down, nonspecific threat information provided by the Department of Homeland Security."

Getting more partners "in the game" is the goal of Operation Sentry, the NYPD's discreet new effort to forge counterterrorism partnerships



ANDREW HOLBROOKE/CORBIS

New York police commissioner Raymond Kelly

within a 200-mile radius of the city. Recognizing that the 9/11 attacks began not in New York but in Boston and Portland, Maine, Kelly invited law enforcement officials from counties and cities as far away as Baltimore to a three-day meeting late last year to discuss such issues as the radicalization of Muslim youth and what New York has learned about how to identify terrorism-related conduct.

Francisco Ortiz, New Haven's police chief, calls Sentry "invaluable." Through Sentry, he now gets updates on regional threats as they unfold, as well as invitations to bimonthly sessions in New York featuring the latest threat assessments and training courses on improving security at sensitive sites. "They're helping us become a better listening post in Connecticut for New York," he says. Ortiz now intends to use some of his

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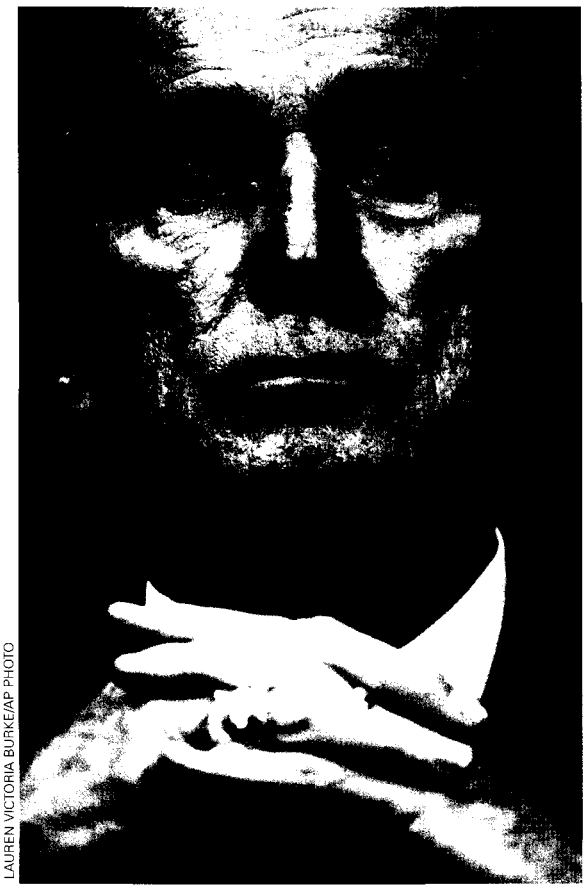

LAUREN VICTORIA BURKE/AP PHOTO

Los Angeles police chief William Bratton

own 400-officer force to start a version of New York's Nexus program to sensitize local businesses to potential threats. New York police trainers have already visited New Haven to help.

Utica police chief C. Allen Pylman finds the Sentry sessions "eye-opening"—particularly one that focused on the "Toronto 18" plot, disrupted last year, to behead the Canadian prime minister, bomb high-profile targets, and conduct random shootings in shopping malls. "My city of 65,000 people is not likely to be a target of terrorism," Pylman notes. "But are there people here who may be supporting radical causes? Yes, I think so."

In many ways, Los Angeles and New York might as well be on different planets. Tim Connors, the director of the Manhattan Institute's Center for Policing Terrorism, which has been advising the LAPD, argues that differences of geography, history, politics, and culture result in dramatically different attitudes toward, and resources for, fighting terrorism.

The sheer mass of sprawling territory that William Bratton's 12,800-member force and other law enforcement agencies must cover is daunting. "What is New York at its widest—40 miles?" asks L.A. city councilman Jack Weiss, a champion of Bratton's campaign for more funds and flexibility for the LAPD, especially its counterterrorism efforts. "The city of Los Angeles alone is some 450 square miles. The county is 4,000 square miles, with 88 incorporated and unincorporated cities and the world's seventh-largest economy. We have 45 separate police departments." The FBI's L.A. field office must protect 18 million residents in seven separate counties, says its head, J. Stephen Tidwell. "Ray Kelly has an army of 37,000. Well, nobody has an army here, so no one can do it by himself."

"You're talking about protecting a county that has multiple climates," agrees John Sullivan, a lieutenant in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and an early champion of intelligence sharing and of redefining police as "first preventers" of terrorism. The county, he points out, contains 85 percent of California's critical assets.

Civic culture and history also constrain Bratton's terrorism-fighting capabilities. The LAPD's notorious resort to illegal surveillance in the past led to extremely tight legal restrictions on whom it could monitor, and for what kinds of suspected offenses. Bratton is trying to loosen those restrictions, but Angelenos remain deeply suspicious of the police. Further, while most New Yorkers witnessed the 9/11 attacks, spent months breathing in air thick with ashes and the stench of scorched metal, lost friends and relatives, or knew people who knew victims, for Angelenos the day was "a disaster movie," says Amy Zegart, a counterterrorism expert at UCLA. Terrorism—except in the L.A.-based TV show *24*—is something that happens to others, not to them.

Another constriction is L.A.'s byzantine political system, dominated by competing fiefdoms

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Complicating L.A.'s counterterrorism efforts are overlapping police forces, including one for the busy Port of Los Angeles, . . .

and myriad jurisdictions with overlapping responsibilities. The California Highway Patrol, for example, polices the freeways that dissect Bratton's territory. The Port of Los Angeles, through which some 45 percent of the nation's cargo passes, has its own police force. So do the area's airports. The biggest, best-funded local law enforcement office in the city isn't even Bratton's LAPD; it's the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, which has a sworn and civilian force of 16,216. And Sheriff Leroy Baca, a savvy elected politician, enjoys a $2.1 billion yearly budget—twice the LAPD's. Of its $1.2 billion budget, the LAPD spends roughly $24 million on counterterrorism; New York spends $204 million.

The Police Commission, a five-member panel appointed by the mayor, chooses Los Angeles's chief cop and is likely to endorse Bratton for a second five-year term. But it's the 15-member city council that approves Bratton's budget and personnel levels. While Bratton could in theory shift officers from gang duty to counterterrorism, Weiss tells me, it would be difficult without the council's blessing. Nor can Bratton unilaterally

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create an LAPD career path in intelligence, as New York has done. Sacramento, seat of the state government, also wields far greater leverage over Los Angeles than Albany does over New York. "Everyone has a view on what we should and should not be doing," Bratton says. "Even the *L.A. Times* seems to think it runs the police force."

Such limitations make Bratton's progress on counterterrorism since his appointment five years ago all the more remarkable. Working with Weiss and a handful of other supporters, he has added 75 officers permanently to the group of 33 who worked on terrorism before 9/11, and he has won the authority to hire or shift another 44 later. Still, the perpetual shortage of manpower and funds has made "sharing," "jointness," and "force multiplier" Bratton mantras. He has relentlessly sought to forge closer ties with other law enforcement and public-safety agencies in the region, particularly the FBI. "In this department, you need to justify exclusion," Bratton says. The FBI's Tidwell describes law enforcement cooperation in L.A. as "almost genetic," a tradition, reinforced by Bratton and Baca, forged by decades of joint responses to earthquakes, fires, floods, and other natural disasters that plague the Southland. On the Joint Terrorism Task Force squads, to which Bratton has assigned some 15 officers, the FBI clearly leads. "And that doesn't cause anyone any problems here," Tidwell maintains. His office, too, has changed its own attitude toward sharing intelligence. "Our motto used to be 'restrict and share what you must.' It's the opposite today." Tensions between the LAPD and the Department of Homeland Security have also eased somewhat after DHS secretary Michael Chertoff met last year with the chiefs of the nation's 15 largest police departments.

"The shortage of manpower and funds has made 'sharing,' 'jointness,' and 'force multiplier' Bratton mantras."

Homeland Security now has an official stationed full-time at L.A.'s crown jewel of "jointness": the Joint Regional Intelligence Center, or "Jay-Rick," which both Bratton and Chertoff hold up as a model for similar fusion centers soon to be operational in more than three dozen U.S. cities. Launched with a $4 million Homeland Security grant and opened last year in a concrete federal building in Norwalk, a 45-minute drive (without traffic) from downtown L.A., the center has 16 LAPD staffers and some 30 designees from other law enforcement and public-safety agencies. Inside, it resembles a modern-day newsroom: a vast open working space, shoulder-level partitions separating the analysts' gray desks, computer screens everywhere, and wall-mounted television monitors showing various American and foreign-language news broadcasts.

The JRIC's analysts don't conduct investigations; instead, they vet tips and leads—nearly 25 new ones per week—to identify the 1 percent that prove serious. If someone threatens to spread anthrax in the city, for instance, the JRIC's "threat squad" of some 20 analysts from federal and local agencies tries to figure out if the danger is real. Is the threat written or oral? From someone who seems scientifically knowledgeable? Have hospitals reported people with flu-like symptoms or who are having trouble breathing? Are adequate antibiotics on hand?

The JRIC's heavy workload troubles Amy Zegart, among others. "The track-every-lead, confiscate-every-toenail-clipper approach may be a political winner, but it's a counterterrorism loser," she says. "Officials need to narrow the scope of inquiry to avoid more wild-goose chases rather than conduct them." Experts also complain that it's hard to tell who leads the JRIC. In theory, the LAPD, the sheriff's office, and the FBI "comanage" the center. But what that might mean in an actual crisis is far from clear.

ALEX MAJOLI/MAGNUM PHOTOS

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Moreover, the JRIC's remote location makes it an unlikely assembly point in an emergency. John Miller, Bratton's former deputy for counterterrorism and now an assistant FBI director in Washington, D.C., denies that the center's location had anything to do with low rents, as some critics have charged. The choice of Norwalk, he says, ensured that the JRIC would be near, but not too near, logical targets in downtown and West L.A. Also, some officials say, since the

Al-Qaida in Hollywood?

A source of both frustration and pride within the LAPD, the "Hollywood case"—details of which haven't yet become public—shows how good police work can break up terrorist networks. But this tangled saga also highlights unanswered questions that continue to surround the 9/11 plot. Two senior detectives from the LAPD's Anti-Terrorism Intelligence Section agreed to discuss the case, provided that they weren't identified by name, since both remain active terrorism investigators.

The inquiry, they say, began three days after 9/11, when the manager of an apartment building in the heart of Hollywood called the police about a group of French-speaking North Africans who kept rotating into and out of one of his units. Immediately after 9/11, he told police, the men shaved their beards, changed out of traditional Islamic garb, and stopped praying openly and attending the King Fahd mosque, one of the area's largest, in neighboring Culver City. The manager also claimed that he'd seen the renters remove a license plate from their car, which they pushed to a side street, off the busier boulevard where they usually parked it.

The police quietly sent an officer with a bomb-sniffing dog. The car was clean, but the police impounded it, anyway, for failing to display its plates. They became more suspicious after a series of visits to the apartment. Located in a slightly run-down four-story building in a soon-to-be-gentrified neighborhood, it had no furniture save bedrolls on the floor—"earmarks of a classic safe house," one of the detectives points out. Posters of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, a known al-Qaida target, and New York's glittering skyline adorned the walls. One officer spotted a pair of suitcases in the hallway: the luggage tags showed that they had been on a plane coming from Germany.

Learning that 9/11 bomber Mohammad Atta had belonged to a radical cell in Hamburg, "we knew enough to be worried," a detective recalls. One of the North Africans, questioned by the police, claimed that the luggage belonged to his brother, who had recently arrived from Germany. But the police found no trace of the brother, either at the apartment or anywhere in L.A.

The North Africans told other inconsistent stories. Virtually all were jobless; several had registered to obtain pilot's licenses or shown an interest in doing so. (The police later learned that enrolling in pilot's school was a quick way of securing a student visa.) One was already a pilot. A police check of public records disclosed that he had claimed on an application to have attended a Florida flight school that, it later turned out, one of the 9/11 hijackers had also attended. Public records also showed that he had registered at an address in Arizona, not far from where a second hijacker had gone to flight school. "It wasn't enough for the FBI at the start, but it was for us," a detective notes.

The LAPD put the apartment and its residents—as well as their friends and associates, some 250 people in all—under surveillance. Eventually, it assigned more than 150 investigators and support employees to the case. Their focus eventually narrowed to a core of eight or ten suspects. "We knew we were dealing with a network of some kind," a detective says. But investigators couldn't prove that the group that they were watching was, as they suspected, an al-Qaida support cell in the heart of Hollywood.

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FBI-led Joint Drug Intelligence Group already had an office in the building, it was relatively cheap and easy to link the bureau's classified and unclassified computer lines to the fusion center's. "The concept is right; the people are right; and they'll grow into it," Miller says. However, staffing shortages prevent the center from operating "24/7," as envisaged. Getting security clearances has also been a problem, according to Robert Fox, the LAPD lieutenant who

When the police discovered that two of the men initially questioned were in the country illegally, they arrested them. One by one, others under surveillance were quietly arrested on various criminal charges—identity theft, illegal gun possession, and marriage and insurance fraud—none of which even mentioned terrorism. In some cases, immigration authorities deported the men on immigration charges. In other cases, suspects pleaded guilty and went to jail, or voluntarily left the country. One of the two men originally arrested on immigration charges bailed himself out of jail. The second secretly tried to obtain firearms in prison. Deported in 2002, both have now disappeared.

The investigation soon focused on a man who seemed to be at the cell's hub—Qualid Benomrane, a North African taxi driver mentioned in a footnote of the *9/11 Commission Report*. Arrested on immigration charges in early 2002, he told the police that prior to the attacks he had driven "two Saudis" around L.A. and to San Diego's Sea World, after being introduced to them by Fahad al-Thumairy, a diplomat at the Saudi consulate in Los Angeles. Benomrane also told police that someone at the consulate had asked al-Thumairy to take care of the two men.

According to the 9/11 report, Benomrane, shown pictures of Khaled al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, two of the 9/11 hijackers, at first pulled their photos out of the group he was shown, but later claimed not to recognize them. The 9/11 commission investigators concluded that "the hypothesis that Benomrane's 'two Saudis' were Hazmi and Midhar" couldn't be substantiated.

But the LAPD detectives who investigated the case remain convinced that Benomrane and al-Thumairy were militants in the al-Qaida support network and that Benomrane's passengers were, in fact, the two hijackers. "Our investigation found, for instance, that Benomrane had taken photos of the structural supports of the Golden Gate Bridge during a trip to northern California," a detective says. The LAPD also discovered that Benomrane had taken his two Saudi passengers to a gas station where one of the two San Diego–based hijackers had worked before heading east to carry out his deadly mission. (The FBI, which participated in the investigation, declined comment since the inquiry was classified, but a commission investigator said that the bureau has no record of such a side trip.)

The LAPD investigators decided to question Benomrane in jail once more, but they never got the chance: he was deported on the eve of their visit to see him (a textbook example of one part of government's not talking to another). Benomrane, too, has disappeared. But using standard policing tactics and procedures, the LAPD investigators broke up what they believe was a cell that supported al-Qaida's 9/11 mission in ways still not fully understood. "We did all the right things without knowing it," a detective notes, calling the case the LAPD's "coming of age" in counterterrorism.

"Only the police are close enough to the ground to be able to go after terrorists like this by using standard criminal investigations," argues Stephan C. Margolis, who now heads the LAPD's Anti-Terrorism Intelligence Section. "The FBI has 12,000 agents for the entire country, only some of whom do counterterrorism. Local and state law enforcement includes some 800,000 people who know their territory. We are destined to be frontline soldiers in what could be a very long and complicated war."

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. . . and a sprawling area to protect of some 4,000 square miles.

comanages the center. "Clearances can take a year," he says.

peration Archangel, a second pillar of the LAPD's counterterrorism effort (also financed by millions in Homeland Security funds), uses sophisticated computer software to identify, prioritize, and protect vulnerable targets—so far, 500 of them, ranging from Disneyland to nuclear plants, officials say. Archangel asks the owners and operators of these sites to provide the latest structural information—floor plans, air-conditioning and electrical-system locations, entrances and stairwells, and so on—which goes into a massive database; the software then assesses vulnerabilities and devises deterrence and prevention strategies, as well as emergency response plans. "We're basically doing what we did before, but on steroids," says Tom McDonald, the LAPD lieutenant who runs Archangel and sees it, as many federal officials do, as something that other cities can emulate.

If such a system sounds obvious, it isn't, Miller points out. For instance, during the Columbine massacre, students had to help police sketch the school's floor plan on top of a squad car with a marker. "Archangel is the kind of automated system you would need in an emergency," Miller says.

But Archangel, located in the deliberately nondescript basement of an office building in West L.A., operates with just 15 people—one-third its projected staffing—and not around the clock. "We are hurt, not just in this program, by the fact that our city does not permit federal Homeland Security funds to pay for full-time city employees," says Michael Downing, who spent time in London studying terrorism before taking command of the LAPD's Counter-Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau this spring. "Resources are definitely a challenge."

Another, adds McDonald, is the reluctance of some private businesses to associate openly with his program, fearing that being identified as targets will drive away business. Such concerns rule out L.A.'s adoption of the NYPD's "in-your-face" exercises, like its random deployments of heavily armed police and vehicles to sites around the city. Bearing names like "Atlas"

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and "Hercules," these displays of force, says Kelly, deter terrorists by showing them that New York is just too tough a target. "There's less fear here than in New York, and less interest in generating fear," says William McSweeney, chief of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department's Office of Homeland Security.

The lack of public urgency means that Bratton must work doubly hard to get the counterterrorism manpower, money, and information that he needs. And that, in turn, has involved lots of travel, for which he has faced criticism. While Kelly is famously a homebody—he's taken no vacation since starting in October 2002 and has made only five day trips from the city since then—Bratton was out of town more than a third of 2005, and nearly as often last year. Staunchly defended by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Bratton says that the LAPD and the city benefit from the information and cooperation that he gets from his travels. The explanation has satisfied most critics. Nor do Angelenos balk at their chief's $300,000-plus salary, much heftier than Commissioner Kelly's $189,700.

Continuing to promote "jointness," Bratton is now trying to get several cities to pool resources to station detectives overseas, as New York has for several years; these liaison officers would share their reports among those who helped finance their posts. Supported by the Manhattan Institute and the Department of Homeland Security, he is also planning a national police academy in Los Angeles to train police from across the country in intelligence-led policing skills. "The nation's 18,000 local police departments have been crying out for such advanced training and broader strategic guidance," says Jerry Ratcliffe, who teaches at Temple University and attended the first planning meeting.

LERT/SIPA

"The LAPD has arrested some 200 American citizens and foreigners with suspected ties to terrorism since 9/11."

Despite their differences, both the NYPD and the LAPD agree that a key way to crush incipient terrorist cells and thwart terrorism is to use local laws and follow locally generated leads, which, after all, is what good police departments do best. Relying on this low-key approach, Downing says, the LAPD has arrested some 200 American citizens and foreigners with suspected ties to terrorist groups since September 11. At present, he adds, his division has 54 open intelligence cases, involving at least 250 "persons of interest." One of the most celebrated examples of the strategy is the 2005 Torrance case, in which the arrest of two men for robbing a gas station in that city eventually unraveled a militant Islamic plot to attack U.S. military facilities, synagogues, and other places where Jews gather in Los Angeles County. But L.A., Downing admits, still lacks the resources to develop its own undercover agents and informants. "We do that with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force," he says.

Because most American cities resemble L.A. more than they do New York, Bratton's priority of pooling resources and information is likely to be a more attractive, if less ambitious, model than New York City's approach, which includes running its own undercover counterterrorism operations. But Washington has begun to acknowledge the virtue of New York's argument that thwarting terrorism requires better local intelligence about what potentially dangerous groups and individuals are planning. Last year, the Department of Homeland Security's "Urban Area Security Initiative" began to offer grants to help local police strengthen their ability to collect and analyze intelligence. Our cities, L.A. and New York included, will be safer for it.

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The Coming Urban Terror

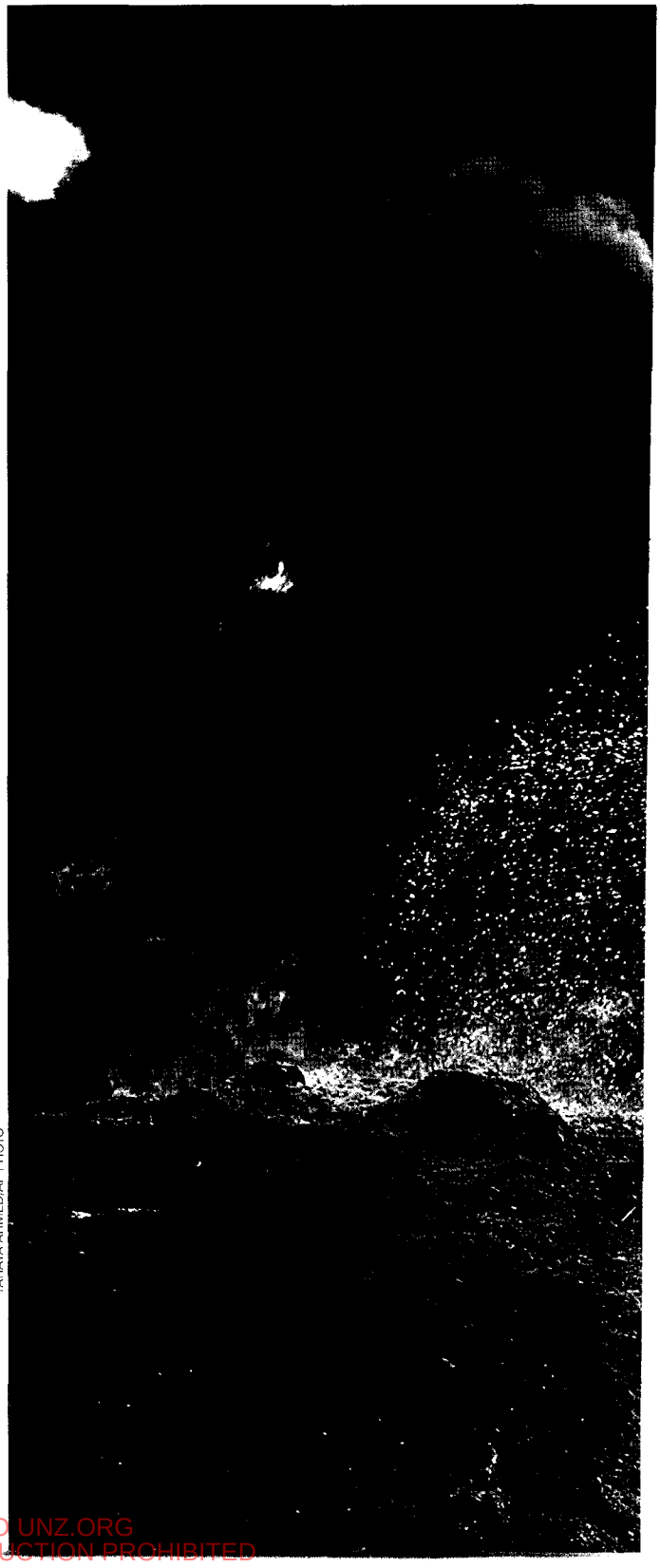
Systems disruption, networked gangs, and bioweapons

John Robb

For the first time in history, announced researchers this May, a majority of the world's population is living in urban environments. Cities—efficient hubs connecting international flows of people, energy, communications, and capital—are thriving in our global economy as never before. However, the same factors that make cities hubs of globalization also make them vulnerable to small-group terror and violence.

Over the last few years, small groups' ability to conduct terrorism has shown radical improvements in productivity—their capacity to inflict economic, physical, and moral damage. These groups, motivated by everything from gang membership to religious extremism, have taken advantage of easy access to our global superinfrastructure, revenues from growing illicit commercial flows, and ubiquitously available new technologies to cross the threshold necessary to become terrible threats. September 11, 2001, marked their arrival at that threshold.

Unfortunately, the improvements in lethality that we have already seen are just the beginning.



YAHAYA AHMED/AP PHOTO

By blowing up oil pipelines in northern Iraq, terrorists set off a chain reaction that shut down power in Baghdad—and throughout the country.

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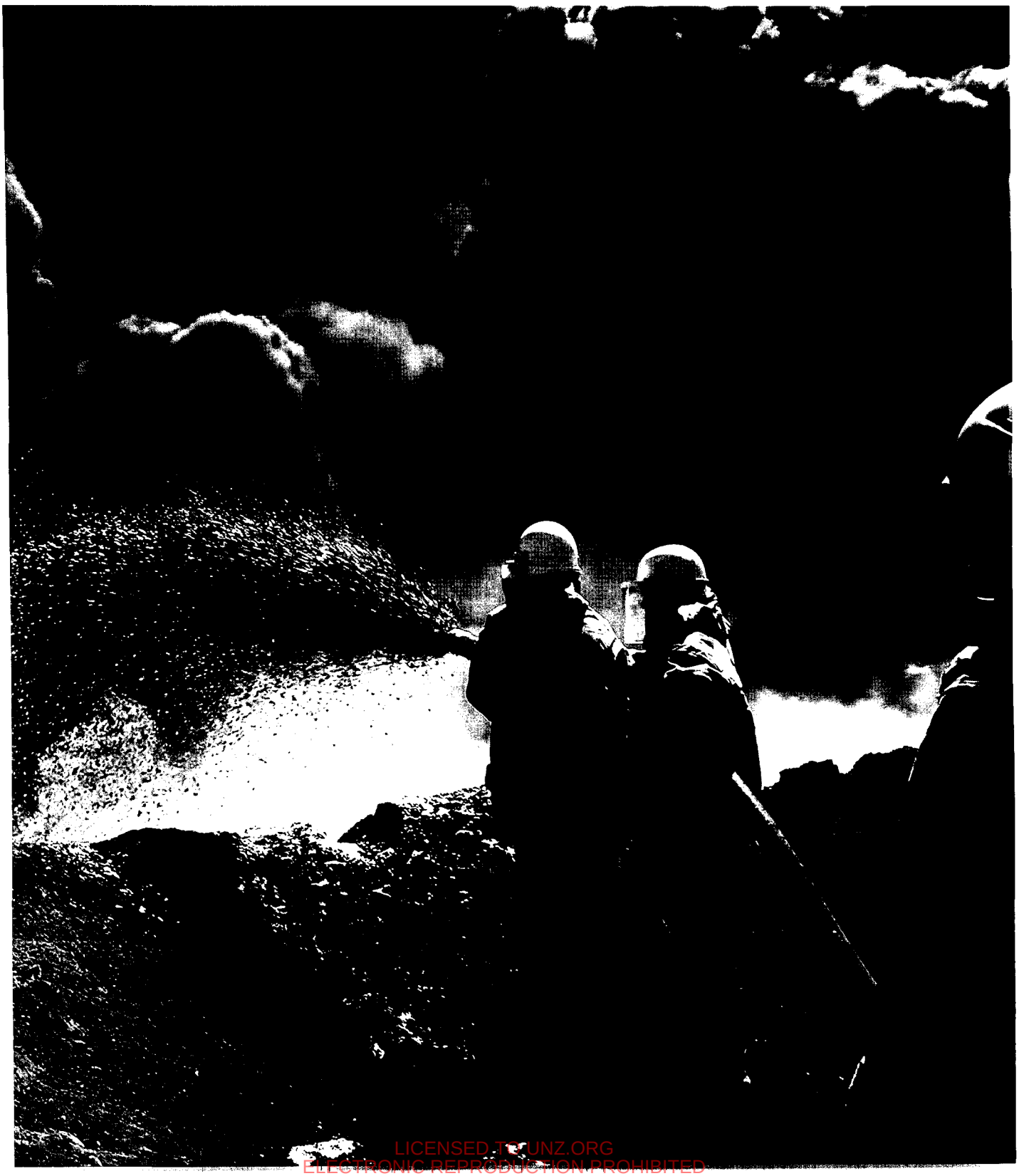

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The arc of productivity growth that lets small groups terrorize at ever-higher levels of death and disruption stretches as far as the eye can see. Eventually, one man may even be able to wield the destructive power that only nation-states possess today. It is a perverse twist of history that this new threat arrives at the same moment that wars between states are receding into the past. Thanks to global interdependence, state-against-state warfare is far less likely than it used to be, and viable only against disconnected or powerless states. But the underlying processes of globalization have made us exceedingly vulnerable to nonstate enemies. The mechanisms of power and control that states once exerted will continue to weaken as global interconnectivity increases. Small groups of terrorists can already attack deep within any state, riding on the highways of interconnectivity, unconcerned about our porous borders and our nation-state militaries. These terrorists' likeliest point of origin, and their likeliest destination, is the city.

Cities played a vital defensive role in the last major evolution of conventional state-versus-state warfare. Between the world wars, the refinement of technologies—particularly the combustion engine, when combined with armor—made it possible for armies to move at much higher speeds than in the past, so new methods of warfare emphasized armored motorized maneuver as a way to pierce the opposition's solid defensive lines and range deep into soft, undefended rear areas. These incursions, the armored thrusts of *blitzkrieg*, turned an army's size against itself: even the smallest armored vanguard could easily disrupt the supply of ammunition, fuel, and rations necessary to maintain the huge armies of the twentieth century in the field.

To defend against these thrusts, the theoretician J. F. C. Fuller wrote in the 1930s, cities could be used as anchor or pivot points to engage armored forces in attacks on static positions, bogging down the offensive. Tanks couldn't move quickly through cities, and if they bypassed them and struck too deeply into enemy territory, their supply lines—in particular, of the gasoline they drank greedily—would become vulnerable. The city, Fuller anticipated, could serve as a vast fortress, requiring the fast new armor to revert to the ancient tactic of the siege. That's exactly what happened in practice during World War II, when the defenses mounted in Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad played a major role in the Allied victory.

But in the current evolution of warfare, cities are no longer defensive anchors against armored thrusts ranging through the countryside. They have become the main targets of offensive action themselves. Just as the huge militaries of the early twentieth century were vulnerable to supply and communications disruption, cities are now so heavily dependent on a constant flow of services from various centralized systems that even the simplest attacks on those systems can cause massive disruption.

Most of the networks that we rely on for city life—communications, electricity, transportation, water—are overused, interdependent, and extremely complex. They developed organically as what scholars in the emerging field of network science call "scale-free networks," which contain large hubs with a plethora of connections to smaller and more isolated local clusters. Such networks are economically efficient and resistant to random failure—but they are also extremely vulnerable to intentional disruptions, as Albert-Laszlo Barabasi shows in his important book *Linked: The New Science of Networks*. In practice, this means that a very small number of attacks on the critical hubs of a scale-free network can collapse the entire network. Such a collapse can occasionally happen by accident, when random failure hits a critical node; think of the huge Northeast blackout of 2003, which caused $6.4 billion in damage.

Further, the networks of our global superinfrastructure are tightly "coupled"—so tightly interconnected, that is, that any change in one has a nearly instantaneous effect on the others. Attacking one network is like knocking over the first domino in a series: it leads to cascades of failure through a variety of connected networks, faster than human managers can respond.

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The ongoing attacks on the systems that support Baghdad's 5 million people illustrate the vulnerability of modern networks. Over the last four years, guerrilla assaults on electrical systems have reduced Baghdad's power to an average of four or five hours a day. And the insurgents have been busily finding new ways to cut power: no longer do they make simple attacks on single transmission towers. Instead, they destroy multiple towers in series and remove the copper wire for resale to fund the operation; they ambush repair crews in order to slow repairs radically; they attack the natural gas and water pipelines that feed the power plants. In September 2004, one attack on an oil pipeline that fed a power plant quickly led to a cascade of power failures that blacked out electricity throughout Iraq.

"Iraq is a petri dish for modern conflict, the place where small groups are learning to fight modern militaries and win."

Lack of adequate power is a major reason why economic recovery has been nearly impossible in Iraq. No wonder that, in account after account, nearly the first criticism that any Iraqi citizen levels against the government is its inability to keep the lights on. Deprived of services, citizens are forced to turn to local groups—many of them at war with the government—for black-market alternatives. This money, in turn, fuels further violence, and the government loses legitimacy.

Insurgents have directed such disruptive attacks against nearly all the services necessary to get a city of 5 million through the day: water pipes, trucking, and distribution lines for gasoline and kerosene. And because of these networks' complexity and interconnectivity, even small attacks, costing in the low thousands of dollars to carry out, can cause tens of millions and occasionally hundreds of millions of dollars in damage.

Iraq is a petri dish for modern conflict, the Spanish Civil War of our times. It's the place where small groups are learning to fight modern militaries and modern societies and win. As a result, we can expect to see systems disruption used again and again in modern conflict—certainly against megacities in the developing world, and even against those in the developed West, as we have already seen in London, Madrid, and Moscow.

Another growing threat to our cities, commonest so far in the developing world, is gangs challenging government for control. For three sultry July days in 2006, a gang called PCC (Primeiro Comando da Capital, "First Command of the Capital") held hostage the 20 million inhabitants of the greater São Paulo area through a campaign of violence. Gang members razed police stations, attacked banks, rioted in prisons, and torched dozens of buses, shutting down a transportation system serving 2.9 million people a day.

The previous May, a similar series of attacks had terrified the city. "The attackers moved on foot, and by car and motorbike," wrote William Langewiesche in *Vanity Fair*. "They were not rioters, revolutionaries, or the graduates of terrorist camps. They were anonymous young men and women, dressed in ordinary clothes, unidentifiable in advance, and indistinguishable afterward. Wielding pistols, automatic rifles, and firebombs, they emerged from within the city, struck fast, and vanished on the spot. Their acts were criminal, but the attackers did not loot, rob, or steal. They burned buses, banks, and public buildings, and went hard after the forces of order—gunning down the police in their neighborhood posts, in their homes, and on the streets."

The violence hasn't been limited to São Paulo. In December 2006, a copycat campaign by an urban gang called the Comando Vermelho ("Red Command") shut down Rio de Janeiro, too. In both cases, the gangs fomenting the violence

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didn't list demands or send ultimatums to the government. Rather, they were flexing their muscles, testing their ability to challenge the government monopoly on violence.

Both gangs had steadily accumulated power for a decade, helped in part by globalization, which simplifies making connections to the multitrillion-dollar global black-market economy. With these new connections, the gangs' profit horizon became limitless, fueling rapid expansion. New communications technology, particularly cell phones, played a part, too, making it possible for the gangs to thrive as loose associations, and allowing a geographical and organizational dispersion that rendered them nearly invulnerable to attack. The PCC has been particularly successful, growing from a small prison gang in the mid-nineties to a group that today controls nearly half of São Paulo's slums and its millions of inhabitants. An escalating confrontation between these gangs and the city governments appears inevitable.

The gangs' rapid rise into challengers to urban authorities is something that we will see again elsewhere. This dynamic is already at work in American cities in the rise of MS-13, a rapidly expanding transnational gang with a loose organizational structure, a propensity for violence, and access to millions in illicit gains. It already has an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 members, dispersed over 31 U.S. states and several Latin American countries, and its proliferation continues unabated, despite close attention from law enforcement. Like the PCC, MS-13 or a similar American gang may eventually find that it has sufficient power to hold a city hostage through disruption.

The final threat that small groups pose to cities is weapons of mass destruction. Though most of the worry over WMDs has focused on nuclear weapons, those aren't the real long-term problem. Not only is the vast manufacturing capability of a nation-state required to produce the basic nuclear materials, but those materials

ANDRE PENNER/AP PHOTO

The vicious PCC gang torched dozens of buses in the summer of 2006, bringing São Paulo's transportation system to a halt.

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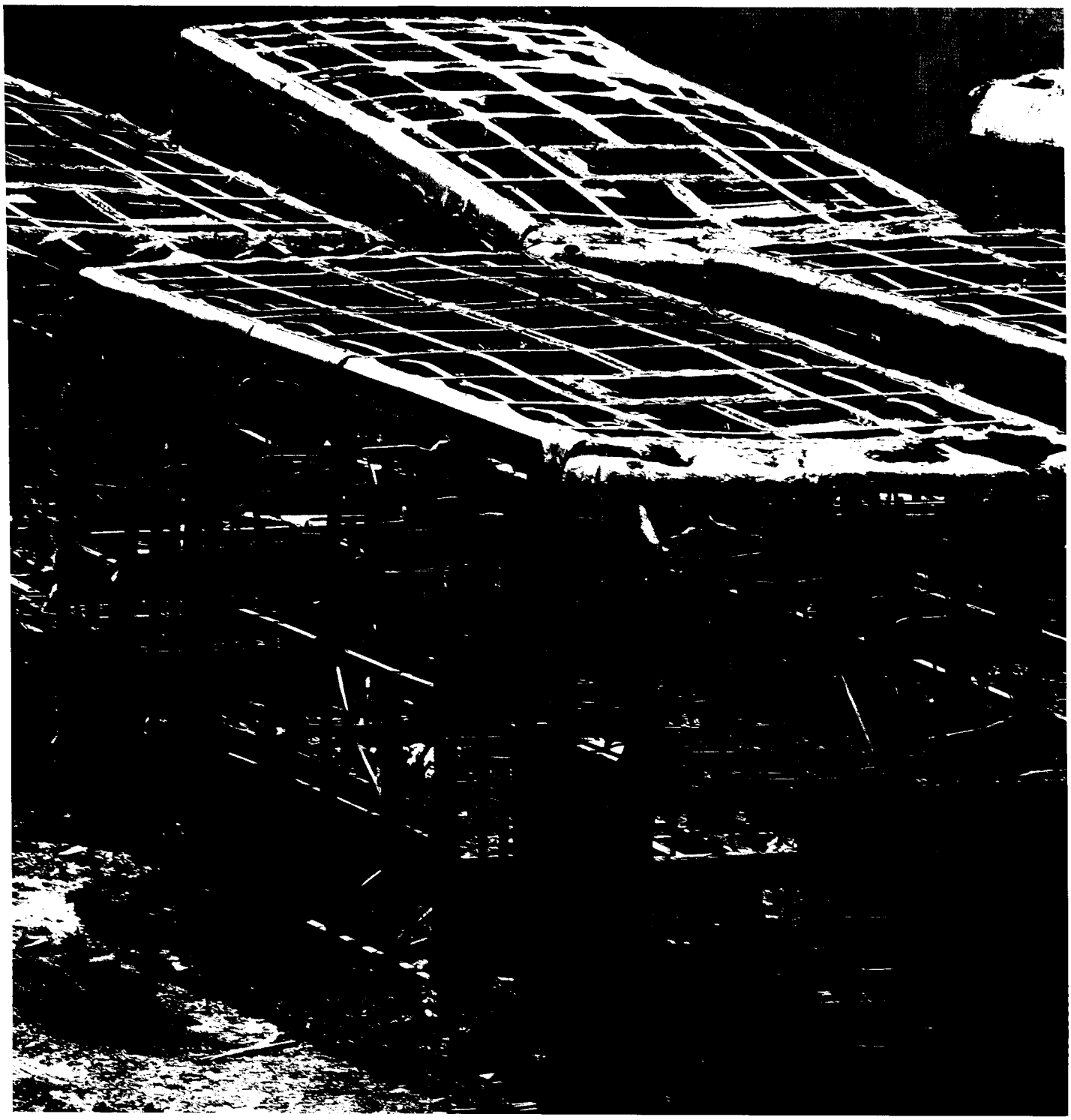

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are difficult to manipulate, transport, and turn into weapons. Nor is it easy to assemble a nuke from parts bought on the black market; if it were, nation-states like Iran, which have far more resources at their disposal than terrorist groups do, would be doing just that instead of resorting to internal production.

It's also unlikely that a state would give terrorists a nuclear weapon. Sovereignty and national prestige are tightly connected to the production of nukes. Sharing them with terrorists would grant immense power to a group outside the state's control—the equivalent of giving Osama bin Laden the keys to the presidential palace. If that isn't deterrent enough, the likelihood of retaliation is, since states, unlike terrorist groups, have targets that can be destroyed. The result of a nuclear explosion in Moscow or New York would very probably be the annihilation of the country that manufactured the bomb, once its identity was determined—as it surely would be, since no plot of that size can remain secret for long.

Even in the very unlikely case that a nuclear weapon did end up in terrorist hands, it would be a single horrible incident, rather than an ongoing threat. The same is true of dirty bombs, which disperse radioactive material through conventional explosives. No, the real long-term danger from small groups is the use of biotechnology to build weapons of mass destruction. In contrast with nuclear technology, biotech's knowledge and tools are already widely dispersed—and their power is increasing exponentially.

The biotech field is in the middle of a massive improvement in productivity through advances in computing power. In fact, the curves of improvement that we see in biotechnology mirror the rates of improvement in computing dictated by Moore's Law—the observation, borne out by decades of experience, that the ratio of performance to price of computing power doubles every 24 months. This means that incredible power will soon be in the hands of individuals. University of Washington engineer Robert Carlson observes that if current trends in the rate of improvement in DNA sequencing continue, "within a decade a single person at the lab bench could sequence or synthesize all the DNA describing all the people on the planet many times over in an *eight-hour day*." And with ever tinier, cheaper, and more widely available tools, a large and decentralized industrial base that is hiring lab techs at a double-digit growth rate, and the active transfer of knowledge via the Internet (the blueprints of the entire smallpox virus now circulate on the Web), biotech is too widely available for us to contain it.

In less than a decade, then, biotechnology will be ripe for the widespread development of weapons of mass destruction, and it fits the requirements of small-group warfare perfectly. It is small, inexpensive, and easy to manufacture in secret. Also, since dangerous biotechnology is based primarily on the manipulation of information, it will make rapid progress through the same kind of amateur tinkering that currently produces new computer viruses. Terrorists also have a growing advantage in delivering bioweapons. The increasing porousness of national borders, size of global megacities, and volume of air travel all mean that the delivery and percolation of bioweapons will be fast-moving and widespread—potentially on several continents at once.

It is almost certain that we will see repeated, perhaps incessant, attempts to deploy bioweapons with new strains of viruses or bacteria. Picture a Russian biohacker who, a decade from now, designs a new, deadly form of the common flu virus and sells it on the Internet, just as computer viruses and worms get sold today. The terrorist group that buys the design sends it to a recently hired lab tech in Pakistan, who performs the required modifications with widely available tools. The product then ships by mail to London, to the awaiting "suicide vectors"—men who infect themselves and then board airplanes headed to world destinations, infecting passengers on the planes and in crowded terminals. The infection spreads quickly, going global in days—long before anyone detects it.

It's very possible that many cities will fall in the face of such deadly threats. Megacities in the developing world—which often, because of

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their rapid growth, widespread corruption, and illegitimate governance, aren't able to provide security or basic services for their citizens—are particularly vulnerable. However, cities in the developed world that properly appreciate the threats arrayed against them may devise startlingly innovative solutions.

In almost all cases, cities can defend themselves from their new enemies through effective decentralization. To counter systems disruption, decentralized services—the capability of smaller areas within cities to provide backup services, at least on a temporary basis—could radically diminish the harmful consequences of disconnection from the larger global grid. In New York, this would mean storage or limited production capability of backup electricity, water, and fuel, with easy connections to the delivery grid—at the borough level or even smaller. These backups would then provide a means of restoring central services rapidly after a failure.

"Biotech's knowledge and tools are widely dispersed—and their power is increasing exponentially."

Similarly, cities may combat networked gangs by decentralizing their own security. Cities have long maintained centralized police forces, but gangs can often overwhelm them. Many governments are responding with militarized police: China is building a million-man paramilitary force, for example; and even in the United States, the use of SWAT teams has increased from 3,000 deployments a year in the 1980s to 50,000 a year in 2006. But militarized police may too easily become an army of occupation, and, if corrupt, as they are in Brazil, they may become enemies of the state along with the gangs.

A better solution involves local security forces, either locally recruited or bought on the marketplace (such as Blackwater), which can be powerful bulwarks against small-group terrorism. Such forces may become a vital component in our defense against bioterrorism, too, since they can enforce local containment—and since large centralized services, like the ones we have today, might actually accelerate the propagation of bioweapons. Still, if improperly established, local forces can also become rogue criminal entities, like the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia and the militias in Rio de Janeiro. Governments need to regulate them carefully.

In the future, we probably won't know exactly how we will be attacked until it happens. In highly uncertain situations like this, centralized solutions that emphasize uniform responses will often collapse. Heterogeneous systems, by contrast, are unlikely to fail catastrophically. Moreover, local innovation—supplemented by a marketplace in goods and services that improve security, detection, monitoring, and so on—is likely to develop responses to threats quickly and effectively. Other localities will copy those responses that prove successful.

In June 2007, the FBI and local law enforcement halted a plot to blow up the John F. Kennedy International Airport's fuel tanks and feeder pipelines. This was another great example of how police forces, if used correctly, can defuse threats before they become a menace [see "On the Front Line in the War on Terrorism," page 28]. However, our current level of safety will not last. The selection of the target demonstrated clearly that future attackers will take advantage of our systems' vulnerability to disruption, which will sharply increase the number of potential targets. It also showed that these threats can emerge spontaneously from small groups unconnected to al-Qaida. More and more attempts will come, with higher and higher rates of success. Our choice is simple: we can rely exclusively on our current security systems to stop the threats—and suffer the consequences when they don't—or we can take measures to mitigate the impact of these threats by exerting local control over essential services.

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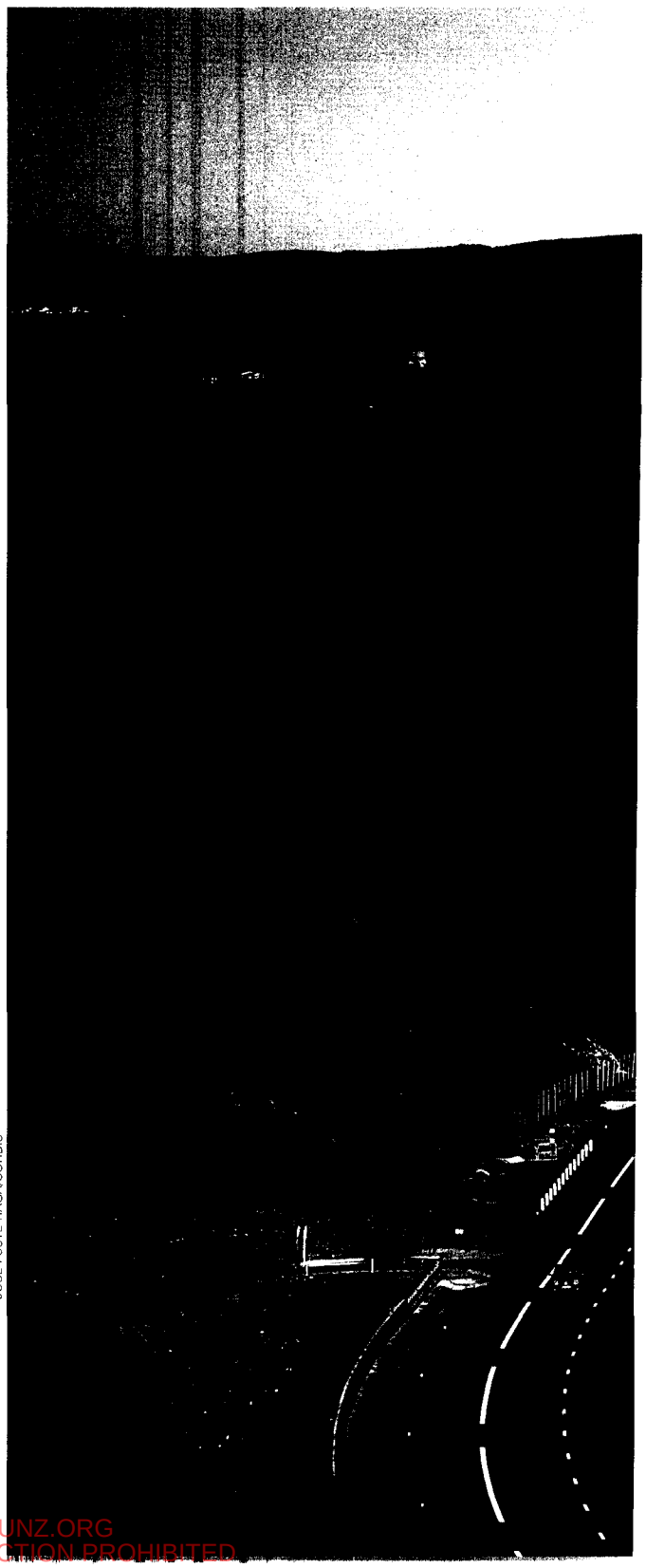
The New Privatization

States and cities are selling their roads, bridges, and airports for eye-popping sums.



JOSE FUSTE RAGA/CORBIS

Private companies operate the Millau Viaduct in southern France, designed by famed architect Norman Foster.

Steven Malanga

I've got a bridge to sell you" sounds like a sleazy salesman's pitch. But if Indiana governor Mitch Daniels offers you one, maybe you should believe him. Daniels has already auctioned the rights to operate the Indiana Toll Road—a 157-mile road linking the Chicago Skyway in the west to the Ohio Turnpike in the east—to a private group for $3.8 billion. He's got other state assets he'd like to sell, too, if he can just get the Indiana legislature to go along. Meantime, Chicago mayor Richard Daley has harvested $1.8 billion auctioning the Skyway itself to a private group, and another half-billion or so turning city-owned garages over to private operators. Now he's trying to sell Midway Airport; it could fetch $3 billion.

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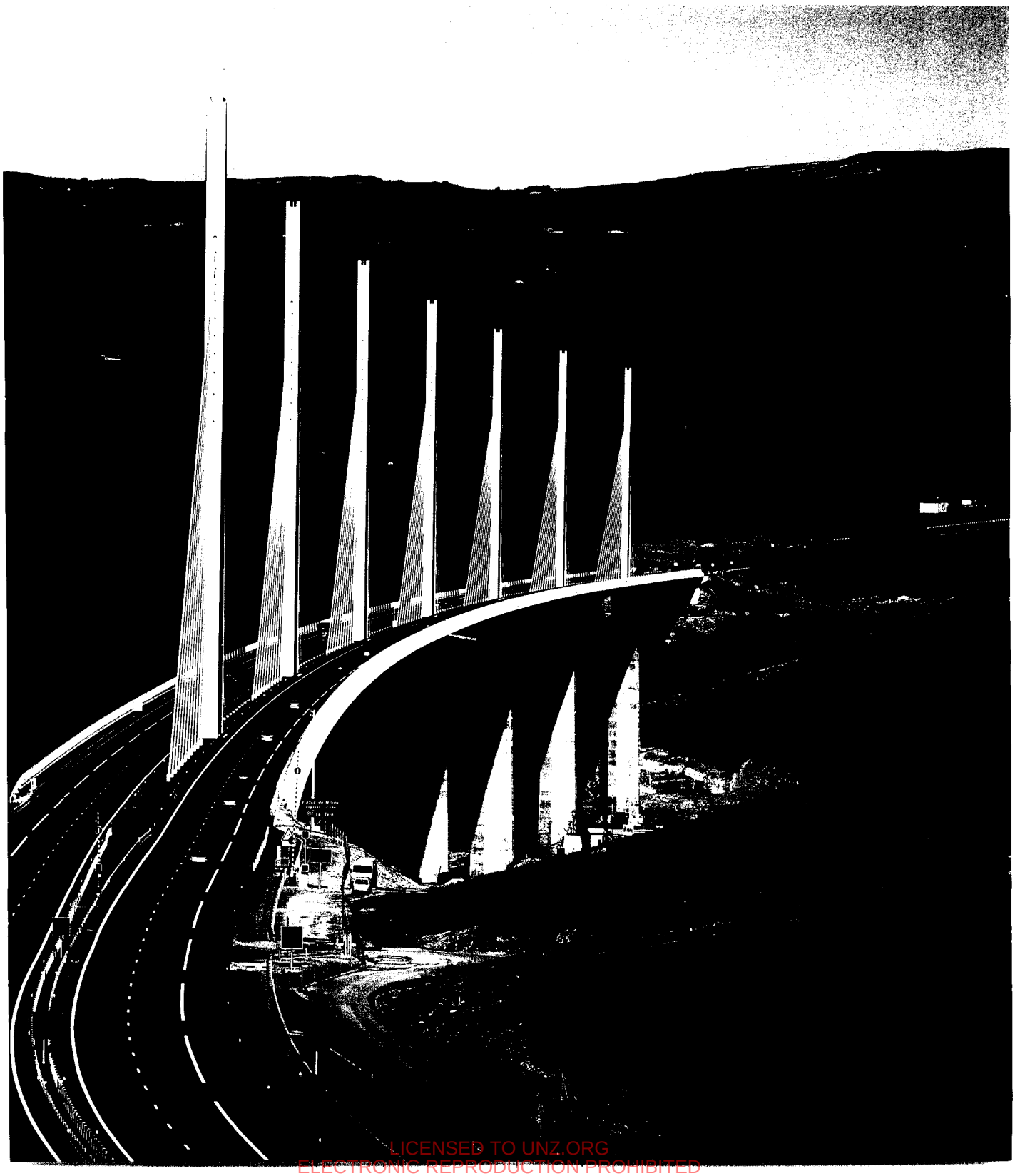

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These deals are the leading edge of what could become the biggest injection of competition and private capital into American government in generations. Across the country, cash-strapped governors and mayors are discovering that their airports, bridges, toll roads, water systems, and other revenue-generating operations are worth far more than they thought, and are eyeing auctions that might produce windfalls similar to those in Chicago and Indiana. They're also looking to recruit private investors to build and operate *new* toll roads, bridges, and other infrastructure.

If the deals can overcome resistance from anti-privatization groups and from politicians who benefit from keeping a stranglehold on government assets, they could help make up for decades of underinvestment in infrastructure—and thereby renew America's landscape. "There's probably $100 billion in domestic capital alone that's being raised to invest in these transactions, and when that's leveraged with debt, you're probably looking at up to $400 billion in money that's ready to go to work," says Dana Levenson, Chicago's former chief financial officer and now an investment banker at Royal Bank of Scotland. Add foreign investment to the mix, and the sums get even more impressive.

The trend proves the axiom that what's old can be new again. Private investment in infrastructure, especially bridges and roads, was common in early United States history. Immediately after the Revolutionary War, for instance, investors put up $465,000 to build the Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike, a 66-mile toll road that proved so popular that it led to further waves of private investing in highways. During the first half of the nineteenth century, private funds provided the young republic with some 600 toll roads. And as the country spread westward during the second half of the century, infrastructure investors helped ease the way, with 100 toll roads in California alone. In fact, the private sector kept building roads until the automobile's arrival prompted more extensive—and costly—government safety regulations, which at the time made toll roads a largely unprofitable venture. Government turned to new methods—especially municipal bonds, which investors like because they aren't taxed—to finance infrastructure.

Privately financed infrastructure has made another appearance in post–World War II Europe. Starting with 1955 legislation, France began to tap private investors to build and operate what eventually amounted to 3,400 miles of autoroutes between cities. Margaret Thatcher's energetic privatization drive in 1980s England sold existing government assets and spawned scores of public-private construction projects. The Soviet Union's collapse led to extensive privatization in former Eastern bloc countries during the nineties. The U.S. Department of Transportation figures that worldwide, more than 1,100 public-private deals have taken place in the transportation field alone over the last two decades. Total value: approximately $360 billion.

Though the United States has applauded all this privatization, we've done little here at home by comparison. While politicians in both parties embraced a "reinventing government" ideal in the early nineties that sought to bring greater competition to the public sector by outsourcing government services, union opposition slowed—and, in many cases, derailed—these efforts. At the same time, tax-free financing, which doesn't exist in most other countries, gave states and municipalities an incentive to build with lending instead of turning to the market.

But state and local governments, spending ever more on such items as Medicaid, education, and bloated public-employee pensions and benefits, have given infrastructure the short end of the stick—even as traditional financing sources, such as proceeds from gas taxes, haven't kept pace with the growing need. Over the last 25 years, as the miles driven on U.S. roads have doubled, road spending has increased by less than 50 percent. Deterioration is the inevitable result. Nearly a fifth of America's roads are in pitiable shape, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, and nearly one out of every three bridges earns the department's "structurally deficient" rating.

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Road congestion, a by-product of too little new building, costs the American economy about $65 billion annually, as trucks and cars snarled in traffic burn up time and fuel. The clogging is likely to get worse. "These costs have been growing at about 8 percent per year—almost triple the rate of growth of the economy," Tyler Duval, assistant secretary of the Department of Transportation, informed Congress in February.

The bill for alleviating these woes will be gigantic. Texas, for example, estimates that it must spend some $100 billion extra on current and new roads to keep up with its anticipated growth over the next quarter-century. Oregon calculates that it needs an additional $1.3 billion a year just to keep its existing transportation network from crumbling. Most states face similar financing gaps—and that's not including the billions of dollars necessary to update airport security and expand water ports.

"Indiana pegged the Toll Road's value at $1.8 billion, $2 billion less than it got from the private sector."

Public funds aren't about to solve this crisis. Rocketing gasoline prices have made it politically unpalatable to increase fuel taxes, and some state and local budgets are already buckling under big annual debt payments from decades of borrowing. "States are desperate," says David Osborne, coauthor of *Reinventing Government* and, more recently, *The Price of Government*. He predicts a "perfect storm" of fiscal stress as the population ages and fewer taxpayers must support bigger government. "The situation isn't going to be getting better; it's going to get worse, which is what has suddenly made more politicians interested in privatization." "Does no one notice the risk of inaction?" Indiana's Daniels asked critics on Capitol Hill last year.

Confronting a $3 billion transportation-funding shortfall, Indiana decided to use an auction to extract the Toll Road's long-term value. In effect, a private operator gave Indiana a fat upfront payment in exchange for the right to collect tolls on the road for 75 years. Like the Chicago deal, which hands over the Skyway for 99 years, the Indiana lease is basically a sale, since its term exceeds the road's anticipated life. Each agreement requires the private operator to invest in rebuilding the road as it falls apart and to follow a lengthy list of operating standards, from how best to fill potholes to how quickly to clear roadkill.

The private operators readily agreed to these conditions and still bid higher than anyone expected—because they saw value in the roads that the local governments didn't. Until now, the only way that local governments could wring value from these properties was to levy tolls or fees on them, and then use the proceeds to pay back money borrowed in the municipal bond market. Fiscal experts long assumed that because municipal financing is tax-free and therefore attractive to investors, this approach would get the best return on investment. But the Chicago and Indiana transactions have exploded that notion, demonstrating a basic principle that anyone who's ever bought or sold on eBay readily understands: the true worth of something is what folks are willing to pay for it. Using tax-free financing, Chicago thought that it could extract at most about $900 million from the Skyway—half of what the auction eventually brought in. Indiana pegged the Toll Road's value at just $1.8 billion, $2 billion less than it got from the private sector. "There's no way that the state could have come up with nearly $4 billion for the tollway using traditional government financing," says Matt Will, a finance professor at the University of Indianapolis.

The vast differences in valuations highlight essential differences between the private and public sectors. For starters, private financiers

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investing in these deals—mostly managers of international pension funds—often have a greater taste for risk than do investors in government bonds, who typically require governments to rely on the most conservative revenue projections. The winning consortium in the Chicago Skyway auction estimated that traffic would grow annually by about 3 percent; the city's own study used a more conservative 1 percent growth rate. The variation of merely a few percentage points of growth, stretched out over decades, helped create the huge divergence in the Skyway's perceived value.

Further, the Skyway sale transfers risk from the taxpayer to the private owner. If the road's traffic doesn't grow as anticipated, the investors must accept a lower rate of return; the taxpayers will already have their money. Of course, if traffic outpaces expectations, the investors get a windfall. The Skyway's new owners—a partnership between Australia's Macquarie Bank and a Spanish construction firm—have shown that they intend to make their property live up to the brighter projections. Within three months of closing the deal, they had installed an electronic toll-collection system to help zoom traffic along and assigned additional collectors during rush hour to gather cash more quickly. The result: reduced wait times, boosted Skyway use—and more money coming in. Chicago didn't bother with any of these reforms when it managed the road, a Macquarie managing director testified before Congress last year. Unlike the city, he said, Macquarie was "heavily incentivized" to run the road efficiently.

For local politicians, shielding public jobs or maintaining jurisdiction over an asset is sometimes more important than improving results. Quasi-public authorities, for instance, now operate many toll roads, bridges, airports, and ports, and too often they serve as patronage mills. To take one example, a federal investigation of a powerful Pennsylvania state senator revealed that the state's turnpike commission handed out lucrative consulting contracts, paying some $220,000, to one of the senator's friends, who appeared to have spent most of his time running the pol's private estate. The investigation has given a huge lift to Governor Ed Rendell's proposal to lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and it is just the latest to uncover patronage and lousy management at the commission—which was supposed to have gone out of business after building the turnpike six decades ago, but today employs about 2,000 people, including 500 administrators, to operate the 537-mile road. "The turnpike commission has traditionally been a patronage cesspool," says Matthew Brouillette, president of the Commonwealth Foundation, a Harrisburg-based think tank that supports the lease.

Even when outright patronage isn't involved, civil-service pay scales and cushy union contracts rarely inspire public employees to maximize results. Chicago's Levenson recommended selling the city's parking garages, for instance, because they simply didn't run at capacity, even though they charged less than most competing private garages. "Government is just not set up to give the person supervising those garages a $20,000 bonus if he raises capacity, or fire him if it fails," says Levenson. In a study that Daniels commissioned after taking office, Indiana found that it spent 34 cents to collect every 15-cent toll. "We would be better off using the honor system," Daniels quipped.

The Chicago and Indiana deals' success now has political leaders scrambling to find other privatization options. Daley seeks federal approval to auction the rights to operate Midway, Chicago's second-largest airport, as part of a federal project to demonstrate the benefits of privatization. Midway would be the second airport, and the first major hub, to enter the program. (The first was Stewart International Airport in Newburgh, New York, which the Pataki administration privatized in 2000.) In Colorado, the independent state authority that operates the Northwest Parkway, a Denver-area toll road, is evaluating bids for a 50-year lease to run it; the transaction could raise $500 million. New Jersey governor Jon Corzine is thinking of selling the New Jersey Turnpike, which could yield some $20 billion, though he's also considering floating municipal bonds, backed by the turnpike's tolls, which would raise less money but allow the

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state to continue operating it. Many smaller-scale deals are in the works, too. The Macquarie director said last fall that he anticipated as many as 25 toll-road privatizations in the U.S. over the next two years, potentially pouring $80 billion into government coffers.

Selling existing assets may turn out to be only a small part of this promising story. With far more money to deploy than there are public assets to sell, investors are now vying to help governments build and operate new infrastructure, and budget-squeezed states are taking them up on their offers.

Currently, 23 states have laws that permit such public-private deals, and several of them have already forged agreements. Texas, for instance, has made private capital a key ingredient in a vast road-building project known as the Trans-Texas Corridor. In California, a private company is constructing a nearly ten-mile, $800 million extension of Route 125, south of San Diego, in exchange for a 35-year lease to manage the road and collect tolls. Utah is contemplating private financing to build the Mountain View Corridor, a road connecting Salt Lake City Airport to towns in Salt Lake and Utah Counties, instead of raising its gas tax by up to 50 cents per gallon. Virginia has inked an agreement with Australian toll-road firm Transurban, which already leases the state's nine-mile Pocahontas Parkway, to study expanding Interstate 95 with high-occupancy toll lanes. If approved, the project would cost nearly $1 billion. "These roads don't exist and in many cases they won't ever exist unless the private sector builds them," says Mark Florian, a Goldman Sachs investment banker and an advisor on several such transactions in Texas.

Private contractors are much better than government at getting construction done on time and on budget. A 2002 government study in the United Kingdom, where public-private transactions are more common, found that 70 percent of public construction undertaken by the government ran late and that 73 percent of it finished over budget. But when government contracted projects to private firms, just 24 percent of them were late and only 20 percent were over budget. In the United States, the Dulles Greenway, one of the few roads built and run privately during the nineties, opened six months ahead of schedule. There's no mystery here, since private contractors can't start collecting revenues until properties are up and running.

"Private contractors are much better than government at getting construction done on time and on budget."

The extraordinary breadth and scope of these deals places America on the verge of a financing revolution—that is, if it isn't snuffed out by powerful politicians and anti-privatization advocates, who're trying to turn a practical solution for governors and mayors into a partisan issue. There's no reason that Democrats shouldn't get behind privatization, as they did recently in big projects in Chicago and Virginia. Nevertheless, Democratic congressman Peter DeFazio of Oregon, head of the powerful House Subcommittee on Highways, Transit, and Pipelines, accused the Republican Daniels of selling the Indiana Toll Road to make "an ideological point" about downsizing government.

Opponents charge that these transactions fleece the public. DeFazio, for instance, accuses Indiana of "giving away" a valuable taxpayer asset, and populist CNN commentator Lou Dobbs grumbles that for government to sell infrastructure "boggles the mind," since it auctions assets built with taxpayer money to the private sector. The commissioners of Harris County, Texas, declined to auction their lucrative roadway system because, as the county's finance director said, "If anyone comes in and gives you a billion dollars, they certainly expect to make twice or three times that."

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Chicago wants to sell its Midway Airport to private investors, who could pay up to $3 billion.

But in state hands, many of these assets, dismally underperforming, have failed to attain their true value. For governors and mayors to liberate that potential without turning to the private sector, they would have to eliminate patronage in the government agencies that run the properties, incentivize public employees to produce better results, and pitch more aggressively to investors in municipal bond offerings. Such changes are possible, but they're only likely if the public sector finds itself forced to compete. Merely claiming, as Harris County's commissioners

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JOHN GRESS/REUTERS/CORBIS

did, that they will adopt private-sector business practices and get better results hardly guarantees that the taxpayer will get his money's worth.

In fact, it's when government is insulated from private competition that the taxpayer really loses out. The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, for instance, has floated an alternative to Governor Rendell's privatization that would raise billions for the state. But it includes placing new tolls on currently free Pennsylvania roads and raising the state's debt, measures so odious, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorialized, that they made "a leasing deal look good."

Privatization foes also claim that profit-hungry private operators will squeeze taxpayers dry by raising tolls or fees precipitously and skimping on maintenance. This charge ignores the detailed operating requirements written into privatization contracts, which limit how much new operators can hike tolls over time and punish owners who fail to meet standards. "The agreement for the Indiana tollway lease is far more detailed than anything InDOT [the Indiana Department of Transportation] had to live up to when it was operating the road," says Matt Will of the University of Indianapolis. "I don't know if InDOT could have lived up to these standards." Consumer choice also protects taxpayers. The majority of toll roads have opened as high-speed alternatives to already existing routes. Companies know that if their roads become too expensive or unpleasant, drivers will abandon them. The owners of the Dulles Greenway in Virginia initially didn't meet their traffic projections, so they lowered tolls to lure more traffic.

One subtext in the resistance to privatization is that much of the money comes from foreign sources. Parroting a story in the far-left magazine *Mother Jones*, for instance, CNN commentators have accused Wall Street and the Bush administration of surrendering "our roads" to "foreign investors." It's true that, so far, foreign investors dominate the infrastructure marketplace. They're mostly from places like Australia and Western Europe, where such investments are more common. Much of their money comes from pension funds seeking to invest capital in long-term ventures with a more predictable rate of return than the stock market offers—a profile that fits transactions like the Indiana and Chicago deals. But far from opposing such deals, taxpayers should welcome them. After all, they're shifting billions

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of dollars in overseas capital to the United States. "I consider a significant part of my job to successfully compete for foreign investment," says Daniels. "I consider it a victory for Indiana when those dollars come here and put Hoosiers to work, as opposed to go somewhere else."

Such ventures are so attractive that American investors are now raising vast pools of domestic capital to participate in them. Goldman Sachs, Carlyle Group, and Morgan Stanley are all creating new funds for the purpose. "Ever since the tech boom ended in the stock market, lots of investors—especially insurance companies and pension funds—find themselves with big pots of money that they want to invest for the long term in stable, revenue-producing assets like toll roads," says Goldman's Florian.

Still, flimsy as the anti-privatization arguments are, they resonate with taxpayers, who wonder whether complex privatizing transactions will prove too good to be true. Tough opposition in Indiana has scuttled, at least for now, Daniels's attempts to follow his toll-road deal with two build-to-operate highway projects. Opinion polls in New Jersey and Pennsylvania show heavy resistance to selling each state's turnpike, though Governor Rendell's strong advocacy of a Pennsylvania deal and the missteps of the state's turnpike commission have begun to turn things around.

To fight public skepticism, local officials must spell out the benefits of these deals with crystalline clarity, hold buyers to exacting standards, and explain to taxpayers the steep cost of the alternatives: either allowing infrastructure to degrade or languish, or hiking taxes to pay for repairs and new building. An American Automobile Association survey found that 52 percent of respondents favored using tolls to pay for road construction, compared with 21 percent who favored higher fuel taxes. Similar surveys in places as different as Washington State, Minnesota, and the greater Washington, D.C., area have all found that Americans favor tolls over fuel taxes by a two-to-one margin.

Also, officials need to make a strong case to taxpayers that they will invest the revenues from privatization wisely. Indiana, for instance, has committed itself to putting all of its toll-road proceeds back into road building. Governor Rendell would deposit the proceeds from Pennsylvania's turnpike sale into a fund that would produce nearly $1 billion a year in interest for spending on roads and mass transit.

Part of the opposition in New Jersey, on the other hand, arises from reports that the state would use the massive proceeds from a turnpike sale to make up for enormous shortfalls in its public-employee pension fund or to finance a property-tax rebate program. Similarly, Chicago's administration has faced criticism for using some of its privatization money to finance short-term budget items, such as a program to help senior citizens pay heating bills. In those cases, the proceeds merely paper over fiscal problems, or buy short-term political gain—all at the expense of the future. Even some proponents will balk at privatization if the money winds up squandered in this fashion. "We only support the Pennsylvania Turnpike lease if the money is put back into transportation," says the Commonwealth Foundation's Brouillette. "Otherwise, we oppose it."

The larger danger is that even as more private capital considers these transactions, state and local officials may come to believe that they can rely entirely on such deals to finance spending shortfalls. But not all roads can work as tollways, since they may lack the traffic to pay for themselves. And it's unlikely that taxpayers will stomach taking currently free government properties and services and making people pay for them in order to finance necessary maintenance or rebuilding. So even as governors and mayors pursue deals with private investors that may bring them hundreds of billions of dollars, they still must find a way to channel tax revenues into infrastructure.

In short, the tough work of correcting a generation of overspending on Medicaid, education, and public-employee pensions and benefits isn't over, and difficult political battles are ahead. But for the first time in over a generation, America's mayors and governors are looking at a realistic way to start spending in places that they've neglected for too long.

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What Really Buys Happiness?

Not income equality, but mobility and opportunity

Arthur C. Brooks

The United States is a rich nation getting richer. According to the U.S. Census, between 1993 and 2003 the average inflation-adjusted income in the top quintile of American earners increased 22 percent. But prosperity didn't end with the top earners: those in the middle quintile saw their incomes rise 17 percent, on average, while the bottom quintile enjoyed a 13 percent increase. This isn't a short-term phenomenon, either. In the 30 years leading up to 2003, top-quintile earners saw their real incomes increase by two-thirds, versus a quarter for those in the middle quintile and a fifth among the bottom earners.

Reason to celebrate? Not according to those who worry about rising income inequality—the fact that the rich are getting richer faster than the poor are getting richer. The National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (GSS) indicates that in 1973, the average family in the top quintile earned about ten times what the average bottom-quintile family earned. By 2003, that difference had grown to almost 15 times.

Rising inequality makes for good political fodder. "When I graduated from college, the average corporate CEO made 20 times what the average worker did. Today, it's nearly 400 times," said Virginia senator James Webb in his response to President Bush's State of the Union address this year. "In other words, it takes the average worker more than a year to make the money his or her boss makes in one day." Former North Carolina senator John Edwards, who sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004 and is seeking it again in 2008, based his first campaign almost entirely on the contention that we are "two Americas, not one: one America that does the work, another America that reaps the reward."

Graphs by Alberto Mena

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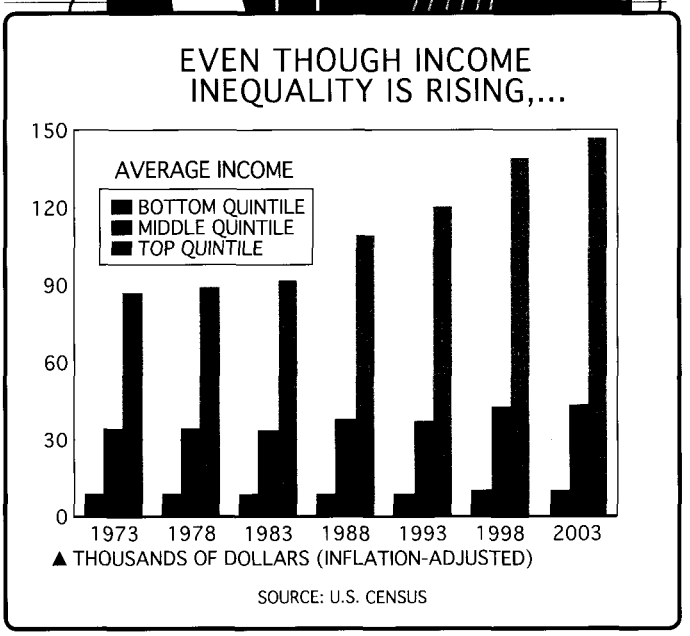
Edwards is one of a group of liberal politicians, policymakers, and social activists who want to reduce economic inequality through greater taxation and redistribution of wealth. And their plan draws inspiration from a particular academic theory: that inequality is socially destructive because it makes people miserable. As a scholar working in the field of public policy, I have long witnessed hand-wringing about the alleged connection between inequality and unhappiness. What first made me doubt this prevailing view was not some new scholarly study but rather that when I questioned actual human beings about it, few expressed any shock and outrage at the enormous wealth of software moguls and CEOs. On the contrary, they tended to hope that their kids might become the next Bill Gates.

Were these people somehow unrepresentative of America? Or was the academic consensus wrong? I set out to discover which it was. What I found was that economic inequality doesn't frustrate Americans at all. It is, rather, the perceived lack of economic opportunity that makes us unhappy. To focus our policies on inequality, instead of opportunity, is to make a grave error—one that will worsen the very problem we seek to solve and make us generally unhappier to boot.



The egalitarians' argument usually starts with the assertion that prosperity is all relative. So long as we are above the level of basic subsistence, they say, we care more about our financial position relative to others than about our absolute income. Experimental evidence, they continue, supports this claim. In one study, two-thirds of subjects said that they would be happier at a company where they earned $33,000 while their colleagues earned $30,000 than at one where they earned $35,000 while their colleagues earned $38,000. In another, 56 percent of participants chose a job paying $50,000 per year while everyone else earned $25,000, rather than a job paying $100,000 per year while others made $200,000—forgoing $50,000 per year simply to maintain a position of relative affluence. In a world of economic inequality, the egalitarians point out, some people have less than others—and as these studies seem to show, that very fact will make them unhappy, even if they are suffering no actual deprivation. The solution to their unhappiness is to impose greater economic equality.

And the way to do that, of course, is to tax the haves and redistribute their income to the

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have-nots. Cornell economist Robert Frank, a major critic of income inequality, adds that such a move might not make the rich as unhappy as you'd think, since they tend to use their income on things they don't really want or need. "We could spend roughly one-third less on consumption," Frank writes, "and suffer no significant reduction in satisfaction." Some egalitarians even make the astounding argument that we should tax the economically successful in order to discourage them from working, since their work will only make them richer and thus sadden the less successful. According to British economist Richard Layard, "If we make taxes commensurate to the damage that an individual does to others when he earns more"—the damage to others' happiness, that is—"then he will only work harder if there is a true net benefit to society as a whole. It is efficient to discourage work effort that makes society worse off." Work, according to this postmodern argument—contrary to millennia of moral teaching—is no different from a destructive vice like tobacco, which governments sometimes tax in order to discourage people from smoking.

"When I questioned actual human beings, few expressed any outrage at the enormous wealth of software moguls."

One of the many problems with the egalitarians' line of reasoning is that it misinterprets the experimental evidence. The two famous studies mentioned above don't necessarily mean, as the egalitarians claim, that people would be happier in a world of total equality. Rather, they suggest that in a world of inequality, people like having more than others and dislike having less—even to the point of neglecting their financial interests. How people would react to a miraculously equal world is something that the studies don't attempt to address.

But there is another, more fundamental, reason that the arguments linking economic inequality to unhappiness are mistaken. If the egalitarians are right, then average happiness levels should be falling. But they aren't. The GSS shows that in 1972, 30 percent of the population said that they were "very happy" with their lives; in 1982, 31 percent; in 1993, 32 percent; in 2004, 31 percent. In other words, no significant change in reported happiness occurred—even as income inequality increased by nearly half. Happiness levels have certainly shown some fluctuations over the last three decades, but income inequality explains none of them.

The same result holds at the individual level. We can judge inequality by looking at the difference between our incomes and those of others in our "reference group": people similar to us in such respects as age, sex, and education. The further we are from the typical reference-group income, the more inequality we will perceive. And if we measure inequality this way, the GSS reveals the startling fact that inequality has no relationship at all with our happiness.

But happiness *does* rise if people believe that their families have a chance of improving their standard of living. That belief is worth 12 percentage points in the likelihood of being "very happy." The GSS asked respondents, "The way things are in America, people like me and my family have a good chance of improving our standard of living—do you agree or disagree?" Those who agreed were 44 percent more likely than those who disagreed to say that they were "very happy," 40 percent less likely to say that they felt "no good at all" at times, and 20 percent less likely to say that they felt like failures. In other words, those who don't believe in economic mobility—for themselves or for others—are not as happy as those who do.

This important fact is another reason that the two studies cited above don't show what the

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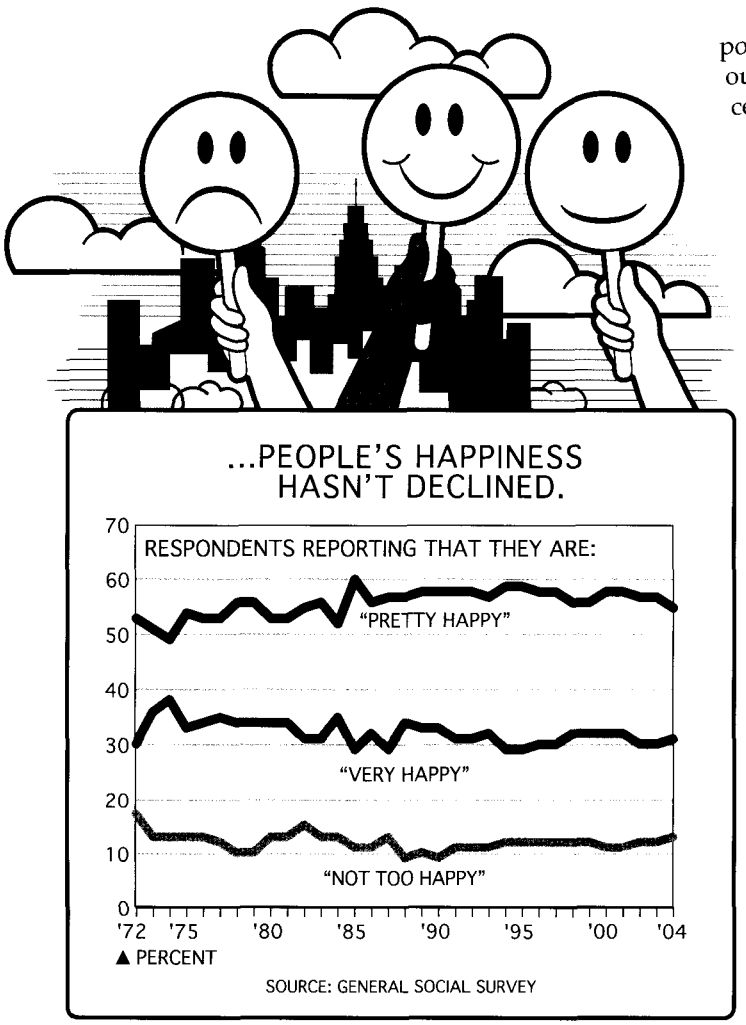

egalitarians think they do: they posit a static universe, a fictional place where incomes don't change. Perhaps in a world where you have no opportunity for advancement, the most important thing about your income really is how it measures up to other people's. But in the real world, our attitude about the future matters a great deal. In the 1990s, economist Andrew Clark found that the happiness of British workers actually rose as their reference group's average income rose relative to their own income—because they saw that rise as evidence of what they themselves could achieve. People take the average income in their group as a measure of their own potential. Rising inequality can even raise our happiness by demonstrating the success that our future may hold.

Believing in mobility helps make people happy, then. But does mobility actually exist in the United States? The Left doesn't think so. Liberals, including rich liberals, are far less likely than conservatives to see a better future for people who work hard. Just 26 percent of liberals with incomes above the national average believe that there's a lot of upward income mobility in America, versus 48 percent of conservatives with below-average incomes. And 90 percent of the poorer conservatives said that hard work and perseverance could overcome disadvantage, versus 65 percent of the richer liberals. If a liberal and a conservative are exactly identical in income, education, sex, family situation, and race, the liberal will still be 20 percentage points less likely than the conservative to say that hard work leads to success for the disadvantaged.

It is small wonder, then, that conservatives tend to be happier than liberals today. The 2004 GSS showed that 44 percent of people who identified themselves as "conservative" or "extremely conservative" were "very happy" about their lives; only 25 percent of self-identified liberals or extreme liberals gave that response. Conservatives believe that they live in a more promising country than liberals do, and that makes them happier.

But which side is right about economic mobility and opportunity? Liberals often cite research from past decades showing that some people face higher barriers to success than others. For example, in the early 1970s, a widely read book by Harvard's Christopher Jencks asserted that schools couldn't do much to fix income inequalities; deeper factors, such as discrimination or cultural problems, were largely to blame. If

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schools don't bring the bottom up in America, isn't opportunity a myth?

Despite the limitations of our school system in improving the lives of the underprivileged, however, more recent studies show robust economic mobility in America. The U.S. Census Bureau, the Urban Institute, and the Federal Reserve have all pointed out that, as a general rule, about a fifth of the people in the lowest income quintile will climb to a higher quintile within a year, and that about half will rise within a decade. True, a significant proportion of people will fall over the same period. But the studies nevertheless put paid to the claim that economic mobility is in any way unusual. Millions and millions of poor Americans climb out of the ranks of poverty every year.

"Liberals, including rich liberals, are far less likely than conservatives to see a better future for people who work hard."

And those left behind, it's important to note, will almost certainly not become happier if we redistribute more income. Indeed, they will probably become less happy. Policies designed to lower economic inequality tend to change the incentives of both the haves and the have-nots in a way that particularly harms the have-nots. Reductions in the incentives to prosper mean fewer jobs created, less economic growth, less in tax revenues, and less charitable giving—all to the detriment of those left behind. And redistribution can, as the American welfare system has shown, turn beneficiaries into demoralized long-term dependents. As Irving Kristol put it three years before the federal welfare reform of 1996, "The problem with our current welfare programs is not that they are costly—which they are—but that they have such perverse consequences for people they are supposed to benefit."

Further, policies to redress economic inequality hardly affect true inequality at all. Policymakers and economists rarely denounce the scandal of inequality in work effort, creativity, talent, or enthusiasm. We almost never hear about the outrage that is America's inequality in leisure time, love, faith, or fun—even though these are things that most of us value more than money. To believe that we can redress inequality in our society by moving cash around is to have a materialistic, mechanistic, and totally unrealistic understanding of the resources that we truly care about.

Finally, arguments against inequality legitimize envy. Americans may indeed have strong concerns about their relative incomes and may seek status as reflected in their economic circumstances. But to base our policies on the anxieties of those at the back of the status race is to bow before Invidia. A deadly sin is not, in my view, a smart blueprint for policymaking.

A more accurate vision of America sees a land of both inequality and opportunity, in which hard work and perseverance are the keys to jumping from the ranks of the have-nots to those of the haves. If we can solve problems of absolute deprivation, such as hunger and homelessness, then rewarding hard work will continue to serve as a positive stimulant to achievement. Redistribution and taxation, beyond what's necessary to pay for key services, weaken America's willingness and ability to thrive.

This vision promotes policies focused not on wiping out economic inequality, but rather on enhancing economic mobility. They include improving educational opportunities, aggressively addressing cultural impediments to success, enhancing the fluidity of labor markets, searching for ways to include all citizens in America's investing revolution, and protecting the climate of American entrepreneurship.

Placidity about income inequality, and opposition to income redistribution, are evidence of a light heart, not a hard one. If happiness is our goal, those who promote opportunity over economic equality have no apologies to make.

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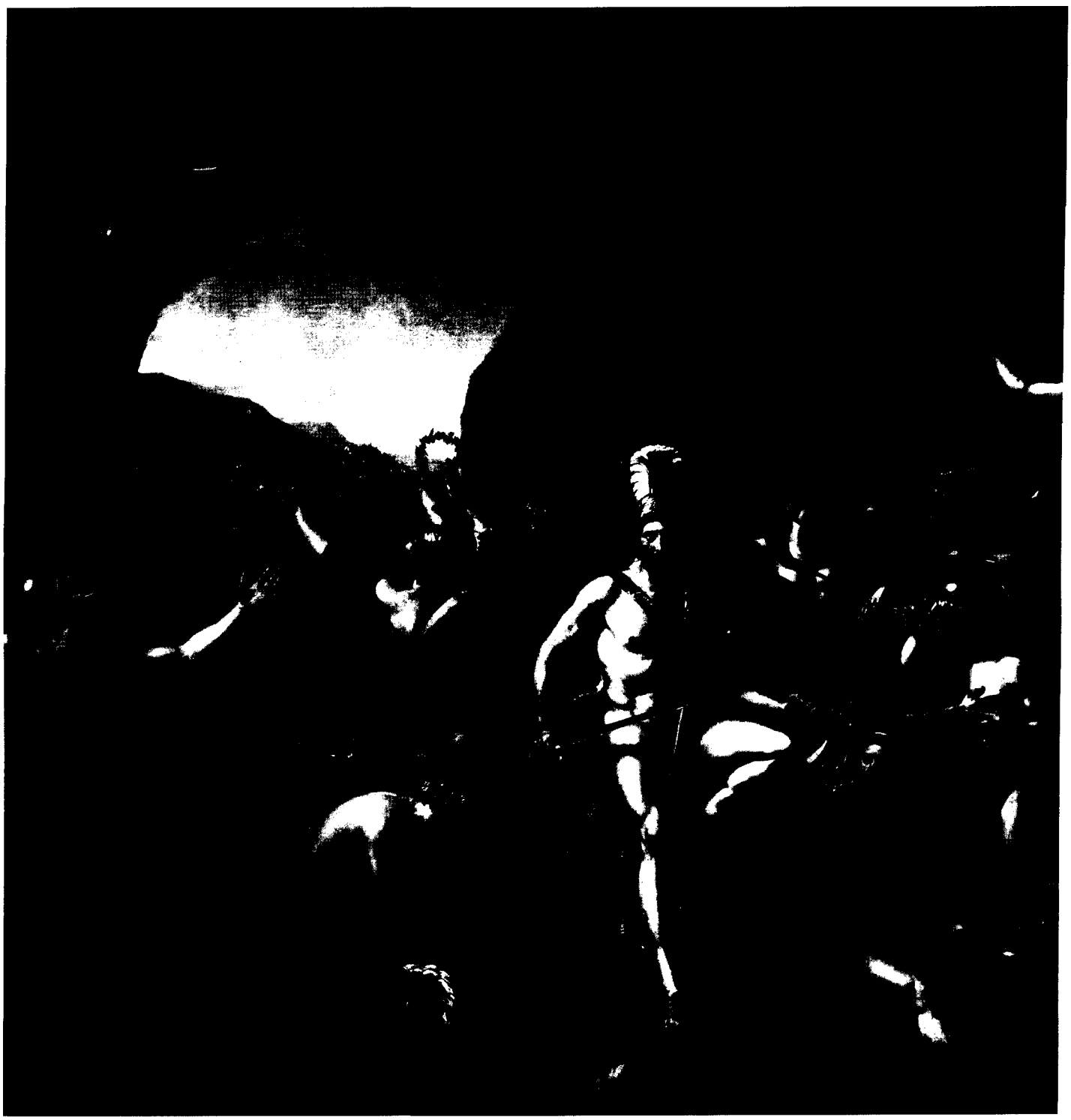
Why Study War?



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JACQUES LOUIS DAVID, "LEONIDAS AT THERMOPYLES"/RÉUNION DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE

Military history teaches us about honor, sacrifice, and the inevitability of conflict.

Victor Davis Hanson

Try explaining to a college student that Tet was an American military victory. You'll provoke not a counterargument—let alone an assent—but a blank stare: Who or what was Tet? Doing interviews about the recent hit movie *300*, I encountered similar bewilderment from listeners and hosts. Not only did most of them not know who the 300 were or what Thermopylae was; they seemed clueless about the Persian Wars altogether.

It's no surprise that civilian Americans tend to lack a basic understanding of military matters. Even when I was a graduate student, 30-some years ago, military history—understood broadly as the investigation of why one side wins and another loses a war, and encompassing reflections on magisterial or foolish generalship, technological stagnation or breakthrough, and the roles of discipline, bravery, national will, and culture in determining a conflict's outcome and its consequences—had already become unfashionable on campus. Today, universities are even less receptive to the subject.

This state of affairs is profoundly troubling, for democratic citizenship requires knowledge of war—and now, in the age of weapons of mass annihilation, more than ever.

I came to the study of warfare in an odd way, at the age of 24. Without ever taking a class in military history, I naively began writing about war for a Stanford classics dissertation that explored the effects of agricultural devastation in ancient Greece, especially the Spartan ravaging of the Athenian countryside during the Peloponnesian War. The topic fascinated me. Was the strategy effective? Why assume that ancient armies with primitive tools could easily burn or cut trees, vines, and grain on thousands of acres of enemy farms, when on my family farm in Selma, California, it took me almost an hour to fell a mature fruit tree with a sharp modern ax? Yet even if the invaders couldn't starve civilian populations,

Few Americans know today that West and East clashed 2,500 years ago at Thermopylae.

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was the destruction still harmful psychologically? Did it goad proud agrarians to come out and fight? And what did the practice tell us about the values of the Greeks—and of the generals who persisted in an operation that seemingly brought no tangible results?

I posed these questions to my prospective thesis advisor, adding all sorts of further justifications. The topic was central to understanding the Peloponnesian War, I noted. The research would be interdisciplinary—a big plus in the modern university—drawing not just on ancient military histories but also on archaeology, classical drama, epigraphy, and poetry. I could bring a personal dimension to the research, too, having grown up around veterans of both world wars who talked constantly about battle. And from my experience on the farm, I wanted to add practical details about growing trees and vines in a Mediterranean climate.

Yet my advisor was skeptical. Agrarian wars, indeed wars of any kind, weren't popular in classics Ph.D. programs, even though farming and fighting were the ancient Greeks' two most common pursuits, the sources of anecdote, allusion, and metaphor in almost every Greek philosophical, historical, and literary text. Few classicists seemed to care any more that most notable Greek writers, thinkers, and statesmen—from Aeschylus to Pericles to Xenophon—had served in the phalanx or on a trireme at sea. Dozens of nineteenth-century dissertations and monographs on ancient warfare—on the organization of the Spartan army, the birth of Greek tactics, the strategic thinking of Greek generals, and much more—went largely unread. Nor was the discipline of military history, once central to a liberal education, in vogue on campuses in the seventies. It was as if the university had forgotten that history itself had begun with Herodotus and Thucydides as the story of armed conflicts.

What lay behind this academic lack of interest? The most obvious explanation: this was the immediate post-Vietnam era. The public perception in the Carter years was that America had lost a war that for moral and practical reasons it should never have fought—a catastrophe, for many in the universities, that it must never repeat. The necessary corrective wasn't to learn how such wars started, went forward, and were lost. Better to ignore anything that had to do with such odious business in the first place.

The nuclear pessimism of the cold war, which followed the horror of two world wars, also dampened academic interest. The postwar obscenity of Mutually Assured Destruction had lent an apocalyptic veneer to contemporary war: as President Kennedy warned, "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind." Conflict had become something so destructive, in this view, that it no longer had any relation to the battles of the past. It seemed absurd to worry about a new tank or a novel doctrine of counterinsurgency when the press of a button, unleashing nuclear Armageddon, would render all military thinking superfluous.

Further, the sixties had ushered in a utopian view of society antithetical to serious thinking about war. Government, the military, business, religion, and the family had conspired, the new Rousseauians believed, to warp the naturally peace-loving individual. Conformity and coercion smothered our innately pacifist selves. To assert that wars broke out because bad men, in fear or in pride, sought material advantage or status, or because good men had done too little to stop them, was now seen as antithetical to an enlightened understanding of human nature. "What difference does it make," in the words of the much-quoted Mahatma Gandhi, "to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?"

The academic neglect of war is even more acute today. Military history as a discipline has atrophied, with very few professorships, journal articles, or degree programs. In 2004, Edward Coffman, a retired military history professor who taught at the University of Wisconsin, reviewed the faculties of the top 25 history departments, as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*. He found that of over 1,000 professors, only 21 identified war as a specialty. When war does show up on university syllabi, it's often about the race, class,

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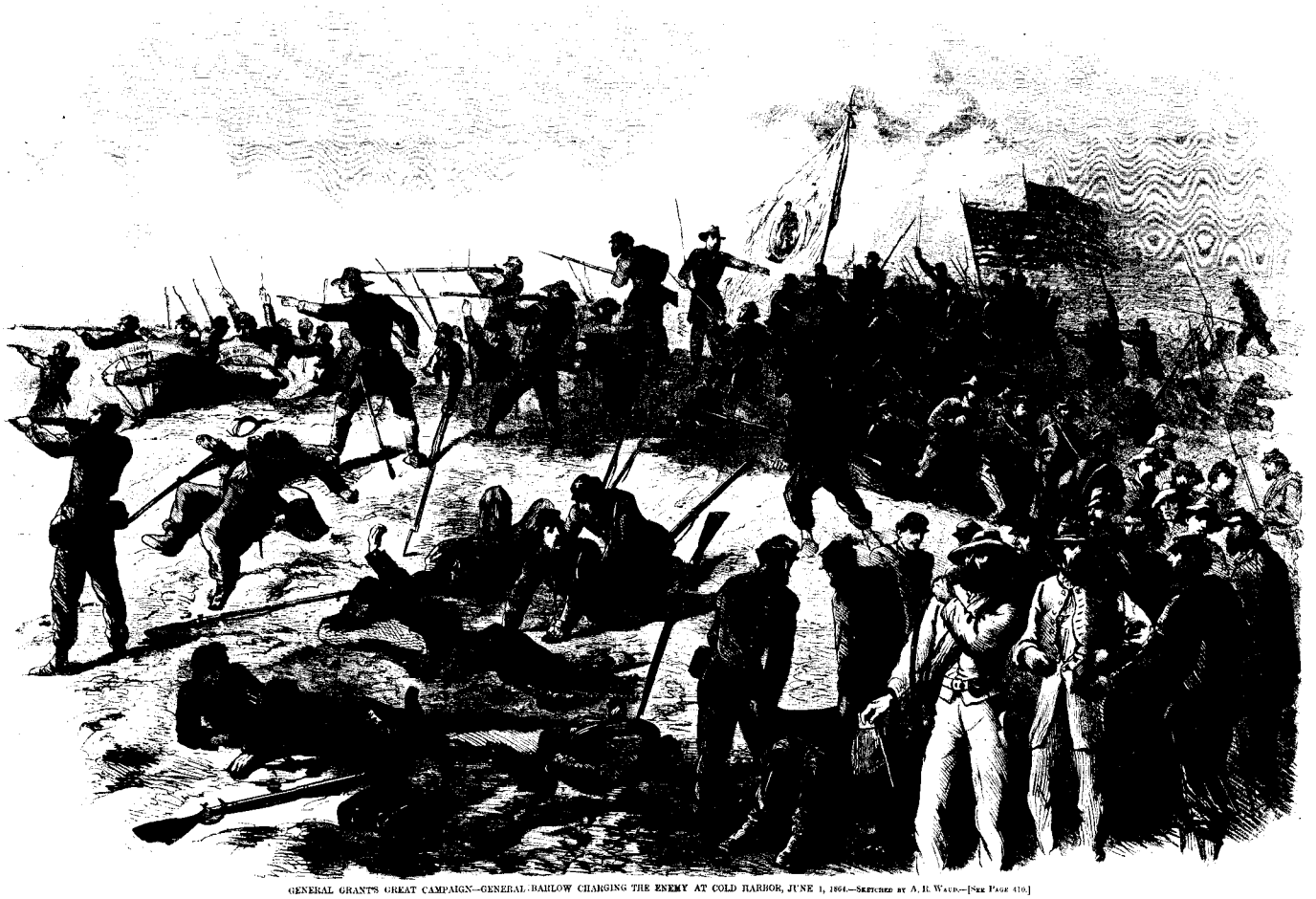

GENERAL GRANT'S GREAT CAMPAIGN—GENERAL BARLOW CHARGING THE ENEMY AT COLD HARBOR, JUNE 1, 1864.—SKETCHED BY A. R. WAUD.—[SEE PAGE 410.]

During the Civil War battle at Cold Harbor, Virginia, the Union lost 7,000 men in 20 minutes, undermining Northern support for the war.

and gender of combatants and wartime civilians. So a class on the Civil War will focus on the Underground Railroad and Reconstruction, not on Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. One on World War II might emphasize Japanese internment, Rosie the Riveter, and the horror of Hiroshima, not Guadalcanal and Midway. A survey of the Vietnam War will devote lots of time to the inequities of the draft, media coverage, and the antiwar movement at home, and scant the air and artillery barrages at Khe Sanh.

Those who want to study war in the traditional way face intense academic suspicion, as Margaret Atwood's poem "The Loneliness of the Military Historian" suggests:

> Confess: it's my profession
> that alarms you.
> This is why few people ask me to dinner,
> though Lord knows I don't go out of my
> way to be scary.

Historians of war must derive perverse pleasure, their critics suspect, from reading about carnage and suffering. Why not figure out instead how to outlaw war forever, as if it were not a tragic, nearly inevitable aspect of human existence? Hence the recent surge of "peace studies" (see "The Peace Racket," page 72).

The university's aversion to the study of war certainly doesn't reflect public lack of interest in the subject. Students love old-fashioned war classes on those rare occasions when they're offered, usually as courses that professors sneak in when the choice of what to teach is left up to them. I taught a number of such classes at California State University, Stanford, and elsewhere. They'd invariably wind up overenrolled, with hordes of students lingering after office hours to offer opinions on the battles of Marathon and Lepanto.

Popular culture, too, displays extraordinary enthusiasm for all things military. There's a new Military History Channel, and Hollywood churns out a steady supply of blockbuster war movies, from *Saving Private Ryan* to *300*. The post–Ken Burns explosion of interest in the Civil War continues. Historical reenactment societies stage

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history's great battles, from the Roman legions' to the Wehrmacht's. Barnes and Noble and Borders bookstores boast well-stocked military history sections, with scores of new titles every month. A plethora of websites obsess over strategy and tactics. Hit video games grow ever more realistic in their reconstructions of battles.

The public may feel drawn to military history because it wants to learn about honor and sacrifice, or because of interest in technology—the muzzle velocity of a Tiger Tank's 88mm cannon, for instance—or because of a pathological need to experience violence, if only vicariously. The importance—and challenge—of the academic study of war is to elevate that popular enthusiasm into a more capacious and serious understanding, one that seeks answers to such questions as: Why do wars break out? How do they end? Why do the winners win and the losers lose? How best to avoid wars or contain their worst effects?

A wartime public illiterate about the conflicts of the past can easily find itself paralyzed in the acrimony of the present. Without standards of historical comparison, it will prove ill equipped to make informed judgments. Neither our politicians nor most of our citizens seem to recall the incompetence and terrible decisions that, in December 1777, December 1941, and November 1950, led to massive American casualties and, for a time, public despair. So it's no surprise that today so many seem to think that the violence in Iraq is unprecedented in our history. Roughly 3,000 combat dead in Iraq in some four years of fighting is, of course, a terrible thing. And it has provoked national outrage to the point of considering withdrawal and defeat, as we still bicker over up-armored Humvees and proper troop levels. But a previous generation considered Okinawa a stunning American victory, and prepared to follow it with an invasion of the Japanese mainland itself—despite losing, in a little over two months, four times as many Americans as we have lost in Iraq, casualties of faulty intelligence, poor generalship, and suicidal head-on assaults against fortified positions.

It's not that military history offers cookie-cutter comparisons with the past. Germany's World War I victory over Russia in under three years and her failure to take France in four apparently misled Hitler into thinking that he could overrun the Soviets in three or four weeks—after all, he had brought down historically tougher France in just six. Similarly, the conquest of the Taliban in eight weeks in 2001, followed by the establishment of constitutional government within a year in Kabul, did not mean that the similarly easy removal of Saddam Hussein in three weeks in 2003 would ensure a working Iraqi democracy within six months. The differences between the countries—cultural, political, geographical, and economic—were too great.

Instead, knowledge of past wars establishes wide parameters of what to expect from new ones. Themes, emotions, and rhetoric remain constant over the centuries, and thus generally predictable. Athens's disastrous expedition in 415 BC against Sicily, the largest democracy in the Greek world, may not prefigure our war in Iraq. But the story of the Sicilian calamity does instruct us on how consensual societies can clamor for war—yet soon become disheartened and predicate their support on the perceived pulse of the battlefield.

Military history teaches us, contrary to popular belief these days, that wars aren't necessarily the most costly of human calamities. The first Gulf War took few lives in getting Saddam out of Kuwait; doing nothing in Rwanda allowed savage gangs and militias to murder hundreds of thousands with impunity. Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, and Stalin killed far more off the battlefield than on it. The 1918 Spanish flu epidemic brought down more people than World War I did. And more Americans—over 3.2 million—lost their lives driving over the last 90 years than died in combat in this nation's 231-year history. Perhaps what bothers us about wars, though, isn't just their horrific lethality but also that people *choose* to wage them—which makes them seem avoidable, unlike a flu virus or a car wreck, and their tolls unduly grievous. Yet military history also reminds us that

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Antiwar sentiment, sparked by America's involvement in Vietnam, helped make military history unfashionable among academics.

war sometimes has an eerie utility: as British strategist Basil H. Liddell Hart put it, "War is always a matter of doing evil in the hope that good may come of it." Wars—or threats of wars—put an end to chattel slavery, Nazism, fascism, Japanese militarism, and Soviet Communism.

Military history is as often the story of appeasement as of warmongering. The destructive military careers of Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler would all have ended early had any of their numerous enemies united when the odds favored them. Western air power stopped Slobodan Milošević's reign of terror at little cost to NATO forces—but only after a near-decade of inaction and dialogue had made possible the slaughter of tens of thousands. Affluent Western societies have often proved reluctant to use force to prevent greater future violence. "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things," observed the British philosopher John Stuart Mill. "The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse."

Indeed, by ignoring history, the modern age is free to interpret war as a failure of communication, of diplomacy, of talking—as if aggressors don't know exactly what they're doing. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, frustrated by the Bush administration's intransigence in the War on Terror, flew to Syria, hoping to persuade President Assad to stop funding terror in the Middle East. She assumed that Assad's belligerence resulted from our aloofness and arrogance rather than from his dictatorship's interest in destroying democracy in Lebanon and Iraq, before such contagious freedom might in fact destroy him. For a therapeutically inclined generation raised on Oprah and Dr. Phil—and not on the letters of William Tecumseh Sherman and William Shirer's *Berlin Diary*—problems between states, like those in our personal lives, should be argued about by equally civilized and peaceful rivals, and so solved without resorting to violence.

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Yet it's hard to find many wars that result from miscommunication. Far more often they break out because of malevolent intent and the absence of deterrence. Margaret Atwood also wrote in her poem: "Wars happen because the ones who start them / think they can win." Hitler did; so did Mussolini and Tojo—and their assumptions were logical, given the relative disarmament of the Western democracies at the time. Bin Laden attacked on September 11 not because there was a dearth of American diplomats willing to dialogue with him in the Hindu Kush. Instead, he recognized that a series of Islamic terrorist assaults against U.S. interests over two decades had met with no meaningful reprisals, and concluded that decadent Westerners would never fight, whatever the provocation—or that, if we did, we would withdraw as we had from Mogadishu.

In the twenty-first century, it's easier than ever to succumb to technological determinism, the idea that science, new weaponry, and globalization have altered the very rules of war. But military history teaches us that our ability to strike a single individual from 30,000 feet up with a GPS bomb or a jihadist's efforts to have his propaganda beamed to millions in real time do not necessarily transform the conditions that determine who wins and who loses wars.

True, instant communications may compress decision making, and generals must be skilled at news conferences that can now influence the views of millions worldwide. Yet these are really just new wrinkles on the old face of war. The improvised explosive device versus the up-armored Humvee is simply an updated take on the catapult versus the stone wall or the harquebus versus the mailed knight. The long history of war suggests no static primacy of the defensive or the offensive, or of one sort of weapon over the other, but just temporary advantages gained by particular strategies and technologies that go unanswered for a time by less adept adversaries.

So it's highly doubtful, the study of war tells us, that a new weapon will emerge from the Pentagon or anywhere else that will change the very nature of armed conflict—unless some sort of genetic engineering so alters man's brain chemistry that he begins to act in unprecedented ways. We fought the 1991 Gulf War with dazzling, computer-enhanced weaponry. But lost in the technological pizzazz was the basic wisdom that we need to fight wars with political objectives in mind and that, to conclude them decisively, we must defeat and even humiliate our enemies, so that they agree to abandon their prewar behavior. For some reason, no American general or diplomat seemed to understand that crucial point 16 years ago, with the result that, on the cessation of hostilities, Saddam Hussein's supposedly defeated generals used their gunships to butcher Kurds and Shiites while Americans looked on. And because we never achieved the war's proper aim—ensuring that Iraq would not use its petro-wealth to destroy the peace of the region—we have had to fight a second war of no-fly zones, and then a third war to remove Saddam, and now a fourth war, of counterinsurgency, to protect the fledgling Iraqi democracy.

Military history reminds us of important anomalies and paradoxes. When Sparta invaded Attica in the first spring of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides recounts, it expected the Athenians to surrender after a few short seasons of ravaging. They didn't—but a plague that broke out unexpectedly did more damage than thousands of Spartan ravagers did. Twenty-seven years later, a maritime Athens lost the war at sea to Sparta, an insular land power that started the conflict with scarcely a navy. The 2003 removal of Saddam refuted doom-and-gloom critics who predicted thousands of deaths and millions of refugees, just as the subsequent messy four-year reconstruction hasn't evolved as anticipated into a quiet, stable democracy—to say the least.

The size of armies doesn't guarantee battlefield success: the victors at Salamis, Issos, Mexico City, and Lepanto were all outnumbered. War's most savage moments—the Allied summer offensive of 1918, the Russian siege of Berlin in the spring of 1945, the Battle of the Bulge, Hiroshima—often unfold right before hostilities cease. And democratic leaders during

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war—think of Winston Churchill, Harry Truman, and Richard Nixon—often leave office either disgraced or unpopular.

It would be reassuring to think that the righteousness of a cause, or the bravery of an army, or the nobility of a sacrifice ensures public support for war. But military history shows that far more often the *perception* of winning is what matters. Citizens turn abruptly on any leaders deemed culpable for losing. "Public sentiment is everything," wrote Abraham Lincoln. "With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it nothing can succeed. He who molds opinion is greater than he who enacts laws." Lincoln knew that lesson well. Gettysburg and Vicksburg were brilliant Union victories that by summer 1863 had restored Lincoln's previously shaky credibility. But a year later, after the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Petersburg, and Cold Harbor battles—Cold Harbor claimed 7,000 Union lives in 20 minutes—the public reviled him. Neither Lincoln nor his policies had changed, but the Confederate ability to kill large numbers of Union soldiers had.

Ultimately, public opinion follows the ups and downs—including the perception of the ups and downs—of the battlefield, since victory excites the most ardent pacifist and defeat silences the most zealous zealot. After the defeat of France, the losses to Bomber Command, the U-boat rampage, and the fall of Greece, Singapore, and Dunkirk, Churchill took the blame for a war as seemingly lost as, a little later, it seemed won by the brilliant prime minister after victories in North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy. When the successful military action against Saddam Hussein ended in April 2003, over 70 percent of the American people backed it, with politicians and pundits alike elbowing each other aside to take credit for their prescient support. Four years of insurgency later, Americans oppose a now-orphaned war by the same margin. General George S. Patton may have been uncouth, but he wasn't wrong when he bellowed, "Americans love a winner and will not tolerate a loser." The American public turned on the Iraq War not because of Cindy Sheehan or Michael Moore but because it felt that the battlefield news had turned uniformly bad and that the price in American lives and treasure for ensuring Iraqi reform was too dear.

Finally, military history has the moral purpose of educating us about past sacrifices that have secured our present freedom and security. If we know nothing of Shiloh, Belleau Wood, Tarawa, and Chosun, the crosses in our military cemeteries are just pleasant white stones on lush green lawns. They no longer serve as reminders that thousands endured pain and hardship for our right to listen to what we wish on our iPods and to shop at Wal-Mart in safety—or that they expected future generations, links in this great chain of obligation, to do the same for those not yet born. The United States was born through war, reunited by war, and saved from destruction by war. No future generation, however comfortable and affluent, should escape that terrible knowledge.

"The study of war reminds us that we will never be gods. We will always just be men, it tells us."

What, then, can we do to restore the study of war to its proper place in the life of the American mind? The challenge isn't just to reform the graduate schools or the professoriate, though that would help. On a deeper level, we need to reexamine the larger forces that have devalued the very idea of military history—of war itself. We must abandon the naive faith that with enough money, education, or good intentions we can change the nature of mankind so that conflict, as if by fiat, becomes a thing of the past. In the end, the study of war reminds us that we will never be gods. We will always just be men, it tells us. Some men will always prefer war to peace; and other men, we who have learned from the past, have a moral obligation to stop them.

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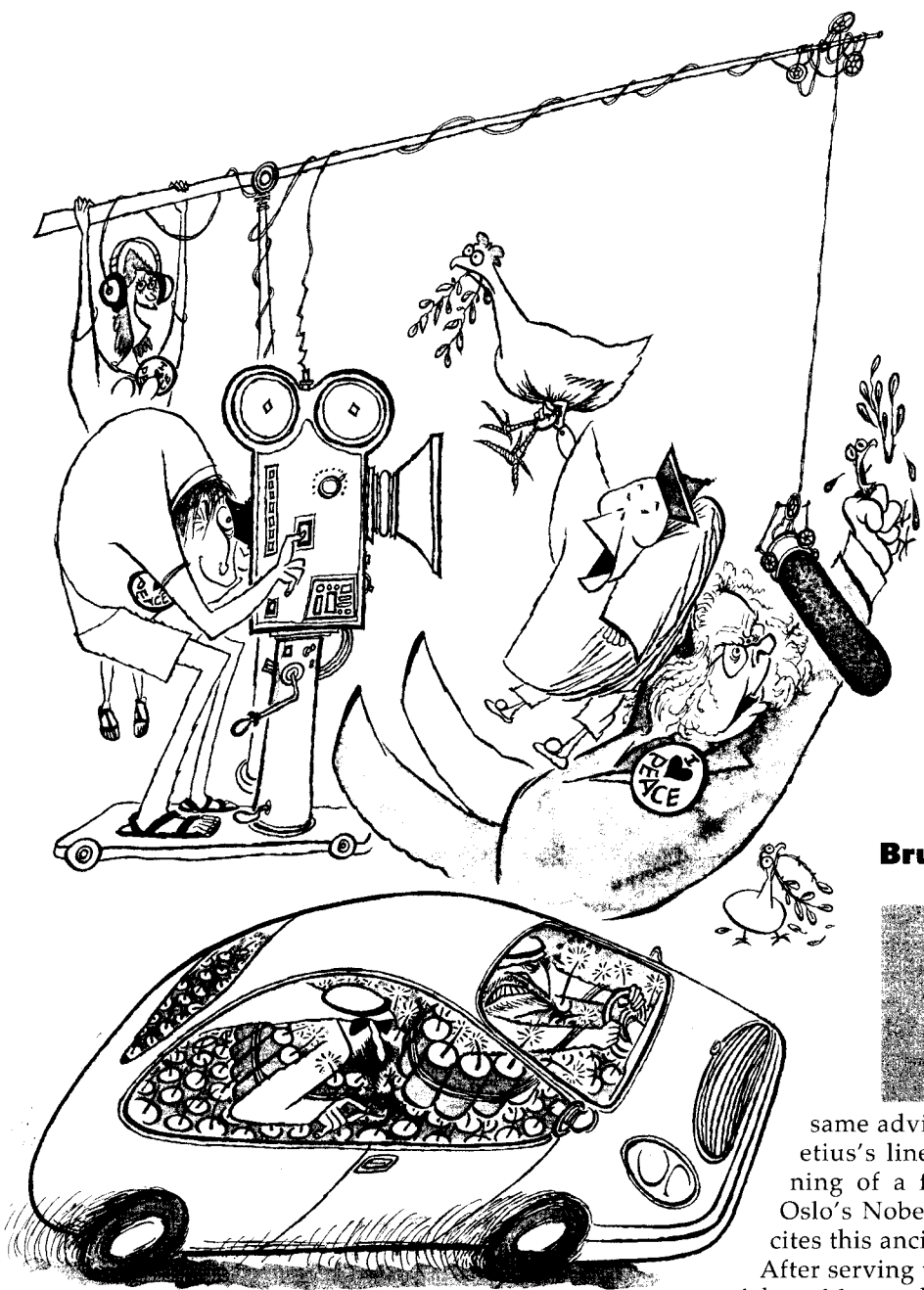
The Peace Racket

An anti-Western movement touts dictators, advocates appeasement—and gains momentum.



Bruce Bawer

"If you want peace, prepare for war." Thus counseled Roman general Flavius Vegetius Renatus over 1,600 years ago. Nine centuries before that, Sun Tzu offered essentially the same advice, and it's to him that Vegetius's line is attributed at the beginning of a film that I saw recently at Oslo's Nobel Peace Center. Yet the film cites this ancient wisdom only to reject it. After serving up a perverse potted history of the cold war, the thrust of which is that the

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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peace movement brought down the Berlin Wall, the movie ends with words that turn Vegetius's insight on its head: "If you want peace, prepare for peace."

This purports to be wise counsel, a motto for the millennium. In reality, it's wishful thinking that doesn't follow logically from the history of the cold war, or of any war. For the cold war's real lesson is the same one that Sun Tzu and Vegetius taught: conflict happens; power matters. It's better to be strong than to be weak; you're safer if others know that you're ready to stand up for yourself than if you're proudly outspoken about your defenselessness or your unwillingness to fight. There's nothing mysterious about this truth. Yet it's denied not only by the Peace Center film but also by the fast-growing, troubling movement that the center symbolizes and promotes.

Call it the Peace Racket.

We need to make two points about this movement at the outset. First, it's opposed to every value that the West stands for—liberty, free markets, individualism—and it despises America, the supreme symbol and defender of those values. Second, we're talking not about a bunch of naive Quakers but about a movement of savvy, ambitious professionals that is already comfortably ensconced at the United Nations, in the European Union, and in many nongovernmental organizations. It is also waging an aggressive, under-the-media-radar campaign for a cabinet-level Peace Department in the United States. Sponsored by Ohio Democratic congressman Dennis Kucinich (along with more than 60 cosponsors), House Resolution 808 would authorize a Secretary of Peace to "establish a Peace Academy," "develop a peace education curriculum" for elementary and secondary schools, and provide "grants for peace studies departments" at campuses around the country. If passed, the measure would catapult the peace studies movement into a position of extraordinary national, even international, influence.

The Peace Racket's boundaries aren't easy to define. It embraces scores of "peace institutes" and "peace centers" in the U.S. and Europe, plus several hundred university peace studies programs. As Ian Harris, Larry Fisk, and Carol Rank point out in a sympathetic overview of these programs, it's hard to say exactly how many exist—partly because they often go by other labels, such as "security studies" and "human rights education"; partly because many "professors who infuse peace material into courses do not offer special courses with the title peace in them"; and finally because "several small liberal arts colleges offer an introductory course requirement to all incoming students which infuses peace and justice themes." Many primary and secondary schools also teach peace studies in some form.

Peace studies initiatives may train students to be social workers, to work in churches or community health organizations, or to resolve family quarrels and neighborhood disputes. At the movement's heart, though, are programs whose purported emphasis is on international relations. Their founding father is a 77-year-old Norwegian professor, Johan Galtung, who established the International Peace Research Institute in 1959 and the *Journal of Peace Research* five years later. Invariably portrayed in the media as a charismatic and (these days) grandfatherly champion of decency, Galtung is in fact a lifelong enemy of freedom. In 1973, he thundered that "our time's grotesque reality" was—no, not the Gulag or the Cultural Revolution, but rather the West's "structural fascism." He's called America a "killer country," accused it of "neo-fascist state terrorism," and gleefully prophesied that it will soon follow Britain "into the graveyard of empires."

No fan of Britain either, Galtung has faulted "Anglo-Americans" for trying to "stop the wind from blowing." If the U.S. and the U.K. oppose a dangerous development, in his view, *we're* causing trouble—Milošević, Saddam, and Osama are just the way the wind is blowing. Galtung's kind of thinking leads inexorably to the conclusion that one should never challenge any tyrant. Fittingly, he urged Hungarians not to resist the Soviet Army in 1956, and his views on World War II suggest that he'd have preferred it if the Allies had allowed Hitler to finish off the Jews and invade Britain.

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Though Galtung has opined that the annihilation of Washington, D.C., would be a fair punishment for America's arrogant view of itself as "a model for everyone else," he's long held up certain countries as worthy of emulation—among them Stalin's USSR, whose economy, he predicted in 1953, would soon overtake the West's. He's also a fan of Castro's Cuba, which he praised in 1972 for "break[ing] free of imperialism's iron grip." At least you can't accuse Galtung of hiding his prejudices. In 1973, explaining world politics in a children's newspaper, he described the U.S. and Western Europe as "rich, Western, Christian countries" that make war to secure materials and markets: "Such an economic system is called capitalism, and when it's spread in this way to other countries it's called imperialism." In 1974, he sneered at the West's fixation on "persecuted elite personages" such as Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov. Thirty years later, he compared the U.S. to Nazi Germany for bombing Kosovo and invading Afghanistan and Iraq. For Galtung, a war that liberates is no better than one that enslaves.

His all-time favorite nation? China during the Cultural Revolution. Visiting his Xanadu, Galtung concluded that the Chinese loved life under Mao: after all, they were all "nice and smiling." While "repressive in a certain liberal sense," he wrote, Mao's China was "endlessly liberating when seen from many other perspectives that liberal theory has never understood." Why, China showed that "the whole theory about what an 'open society' is must be rewritten, probably also the theory of 'democracy'—and it will take a long time before the West will be willing to view China as a master teacher in such subjects."

Nor has Galtung changed his tune over the decades. Recently he gave a lecture that was a smorgasbord of wild accusations about America's refusing to negotiate with Saddam, America's secret plans to make war in Azerbaijan, Nazis in the State Department, the CIA's responsibility for 6 million covert murders, and so on. Galtung called for a Truth and Reconciliation Committee in Iraq—to treat America's crimes, not the Baathists'.

Galtung's use of the word "peace" to legitimize totalitarianism is an old Communist tradition. In August 1939, when the Nazis and Soviets signed their nonaggression pact, the same Western Stalinists who had been calling for war against Germany did an about-face and began to praise peace. (After Hitler invaded Russia, the Stalinists reversed themselves again, demanding that the West help Stalin crush the Third Reich.) The peace talk, in short, was really about sympathizing with Communism, not peace. And it continued after the war, when Stalin's Western supporters whitewashed his monstrous regime and denounced anti-Communists as warmongering crypto-fascists. "Peace conferences" and "friendship committees" drew hordes of liberal dupes, who didn't grasp that their new "friends" were not ordinary Russians but the jailers of ordinary Russians—and that the committees were about not "friendship" but deception, exploitation, and espionage.

The people running today's peace studies programs give a good idea of the movement's illiberal, anti-American inclinations. The director of Purdue's program is coeditor of *Marxism Today*, a collection of essays extolling socialism; Brandeis's peace studies chairman has justified suicide bombings; the program director at the University of Missouri authorized a mass e-mail urging students and faculty to boycott classes to protest the Iraq invasion; and the University of Maine's program director believes that "humans have been out of balance for centuries" and that "a unique opportunity of this new century is to engage in the creation of balance and harmony between yin and yang, masculine and feminine energies." (Such New Age babble often mixes with the Marxism in peace studies jargon.)

What these people teach remains faithful to Galtung's anti-Western inspiration. First and foremost, they emphasize that the world's great evil is capitalism—because it leads to imperialism, which in turn leads to war. The account of capitalism in David Barash and Charles Webel's widely used 2002 textbook *Peace and Conflict Studies* leans heavily on Lenin, who "maintained that only revolution—not reform—could undo

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capitalism's tendency toward imperialism and thence to war," and on Galtung, who helpfully revised Lenin's theories to account for America's "indirect" imperialism. Students acquire a zero-sum picture of the world economy: if some countries and people are poor, it's because others are rich. They're taught that American wealth derives entirely from exploitation and that Americans, accordingly, are responsible for world poverty.

If the image of tenured professors pushing such anticapitalist nonsense on privileged suburban kids sounds like a classic case of liberals' throwing stones at their own houses, get a load of this: America's leading Peace Racket institution is probably the University of Notre Dame's Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies—endowed by and named for the widow of Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's, the ultimate symbol of evil corporate America. It was the Kroc Institute, by the way, that in 2004 invited Islamist scholar Tariq Ramadan to join its faculty, only to see him denied a U.S. visa on the grounds that he had defended terrorism.

"For the Peace Racket, to kill innocents in cold blood is to buy the right to dialogue, concessions—and power."

Peace studies students also discover how to think in terms of "deep culture." How to prevent war between, say, the U.S. and Saddam's Iraq? Answer: examine each country's deep culture—its key psychosocial traits, good and bad—to understand its motives. Americans, according to this bestiary, are warlike and money-obsessed; Iraqis are intensely religious and proud. Not surprisingly, the Peace Racket's summations of deep cultures skew against the West. The deep-culture approach also avoids calling tyrants or terrorists "evil"—for behind every atrocity, in this view, lies a legitimate grievance, which the peacemaker should locate so that all parties can meet at the negotiating table as moral equals. SUNY Binghamton, for instance, offers a peace studies course that seeks to "arrive at an understanding of contemporary violence in its ideological, cultural, and structural dimensions in a bid to move away from 'evil,' 'inhuman,' and 'uncivilized' as analytical categories."

For the Peace Racket, to kill innocents in cold blood is to buy the right to dialogue, negotiation, concessions—and power. So students learn to identify "insurgent" or "militant" groups with the populations they purport to represent. A few years ago, a peace organization called Transcend equated the demands of the Basque terrorist group ETA with "the desires of the Basque people"—as if a "people" were a monolithic group for whom a band of murderous thugs could presume to speak. The complaints that Transcend made about the Spanish government's "blockade positions"—its refusal to cave to terrorist demands—and the Spanish media's lack of "objectivity"—their refusal to take a middle position between Spanish society and ETA terrorists—are standard Peace Racket fare. Similarly, during Saddam's dictatorship, "peace scholars" wrote as if Iraq were equivalent to Saddam and the Baath party, entirely removing from the picture the Shiites and Kurds whom Saddam's regime subjugated, tortured, and slaughtered.

The recipes for peace that flow from such thinking seem designed not only to buttress oppression but to create more of it. For if democracies consistently followed the Peace Racket's recommendations, what they'd eventually reap would be the kind of peace found today in Havana or Pyongyang.

The Peace Racket maintains that the Western world's profound moral culpability, arising from its history of colonialism and economic exploitation, deprives it of any right to judge non-Western countries or individuals. Further, the non-West has suffered so much from exploitation that whatever offenses it commits are legitimate attempts to recapture dignity, obtain justice, and exact revenge. Have Third

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World terrorists taken Americans hostage? Don't call the hostages innocent victims. After all, as Americans, they're complicit in a system that has long inflicted "structural violence" (or "structural terrorism") upon the Third World poor. Donald Rothberg of San Francisco's Saybrook Institute explains: "In using the term 'structural violence,' we identify phenomena as violent that are not usually seen as violent. For example, Western economic domination."

It is this mind-set that leads peace professors to accuse the U.S. of "state terrorism," to call George W. Bush "the world's worst terrorist," and even to characterize those murdered in the Twin Towers as oppressors who, by working at investment banks and brokerage houses, were ultimately responsible for their own deaths. Barash and Webel, for instance, write sympathetically of "frustrated, impoverished, infuriated people . . . who view the United States as a terrorist country" and for whom "attacks on American civilians were justified" because one shouldn't distinguish "between a 'terrorist state' and the citizens who aid and abet that state." They also approvingly quote Osama bin Laden's claim that for many "disempowered" people, "Americans are the worst terrorists in the world"—thereby inviting students to consider Osama a legitimate spokesperson for the "disempowered." Speaking at a memorial concert on the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, George Wolfe of Ball State University's peace studies program suggested that we "reflect on what we as Americans may have done or not done, to invoke such extreme hatred." The Kroc Institute's David Cortright agrees: "We must ask ourselves . . . what the United States has done to incur such wrath."

In short, it's America that is the wellspring of the world's problems. In the peace studies world, America's role as the beacon of opportunity for generations of immigrants is mocked, its defense of freedom in World War II and the cold war is reinterpreted to its discredit, and every major postwar atrocity (the Gulag, the Cultural Revolution, genocide in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Sudan) is ignored, minimized, or—as with 9/11—blamed on the U.S. itself.

One peace studies motif holds that the U.S. intentionally preserves its enemies to justify military expenses. According to a 2000 article by

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Michael Klare, professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College, for instance, the Pentagon deplored the prospect of peace between the Koreas because it "would erase the most menacing of our putative 'rogue state' adversaries" and thus "imperil . . . future military appropriations." (For Klare, North Korea is only "putatively" a rogue state.) The director of Cornell's peace studies program, Matthew Evangelista, blames the cold war on the U.S. Defense Department and claims that it ended only because a good-hearted, newly enlightened Gorbachev "heeded the advice of transnational [peace] activists." You might think that no one could fall for such nonsense. But keep in mind that the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and that students starting college in 2007 arrived in the world a year later. They don't remember the cold war—and are ripe targets for disinformation.

As for America's response to terrorism, Barash and Webel tidily sum up the view of many peace studies professors: "A peace-oriented perspective condemns not only terrorist attacks but also any violent response to them." How *should* democracies respond to aggression? Hold dialogue. Make concessions. Apologize. Neville Chamberlain's 1938 capitulation to Hitler at Munich taught—or should have taught—that appeasement just puts off a final reckoning, giving an enemy time to gain strength. The foundation of the Peace Racket's success lies in forgetting this lesson. Peace studies students discover that the lesson of World War II is the evil of war itself and the need to prevent it by all possible means—which, of course, is exactly what Chamberlain thought he was doing in Munich. What they learn, in short, is the opposite of the war's real lesson.

Warblogger Frank Martin described his visit to the military cemetery at Arnhem, in the Netherlands, where a teenage guide said that the Allied soldiers "were fighting for bridges; how silly that they would all fight for something like that." Martin was outraged: "I tried to explain that they weren't fighting for bridges, but for his and his families' freedom." That teenager articulated precisely the kind of thinking that peace professors seek to instill in their students—that freedom is at best an overvalued asset that can hinder peacemaking, and at worst a lie, and that those who harp on it are either American propagandists or dupes who've fallen for the propaganda. In March, Yusra Moshtat, an associate of the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research, and Jan Oberg, director of the foundation, wrote that "words like democracy and freedom are deceptive, cover-ups or Unspeak." And in a 1997 speech at a Texas peace foundation, Oscar Arias, ex-president of Costa Rica and founder of his own peace foundation, described the American preoccupation with freedom versus tyranny as "obsolete," "oversimplified," and above all "dangerous," because it could lead to war. In other words, if you want to ensure peace, worry less about freedom. Appease tyranny, accept it, embrace it—and there'll be no more war.

That's the Peace Racket's message in a nutshell—and students find themselves graded largely on their willingness to echo it. For while the peace professor argues that terrorist positions deserve respect at the negotiating table, he seldom tolerates alternative views in the classroom. Real education exposes students to a range of ideas and trains them to think critically about all orthodoxies. Peace studies, as a rule, rejects questioning of its own guiding ideology.

Take the case of Brett Mock, who writes in *FrontPage Magazine* that a peace studies class he'd taken in 2004 at Ball State University—"indoctrination rather than education," as he puts it—had been "designed entirely to delegitimize the use of the military in the defense of our country." The teacher, George Wolfe, "would not allow any serious study of the reasons for the use of force in response to an attack," and students were expected to "parrot . . . back views we did not agree with." To get full credit, moreover, Mock reports, students had to "meditate at the Peace Studies center," "attend Interfaith Fellowship meetings," or join Peace Workers—a group that Wolfe founded and that, according to Sara Dogan of Students for Academic Freedom, "is part of a coalition of radical groups that

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includes the Muslim Students Association . . . and the Young Communist League." Kyle Ellis, another Ball State student, added that "Wolfe has required students to attend a screening of the antiwar propaganda film *Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the War in Iraq*, without material critical of the film and representing the other side."

Then there's Andrew Saraf, who in 2006 objected publicly to the one-sidedness of a peace studies course taught at his Bethesda high school by *Washington Post* columnist Colman McCarthy. "The 'class,' " Saraf complained, "is headed by an individual with a political agenda, who wants to teach students the 'right' way of thinking by giving them facts that are skewed in one direction." McCarthy shrugged off the criticism, having long ago admitted his course's bias: "Over the years, I've had suggestions from other teachers to offer what they call 'balance' in my courses, that I should give students 'the other side.' I'm never sure exactly what that means. After assigning students to read Gandhi I should have them also read Carl von Clausewitz? After Martin Luther King's essay against the Vietnam War, Colin Powell's memoir favoring the Persian Gulf War? After Justice William Brennan and Thurgood Marshall's views opposing the death penalty, George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein's favoring it? After a woman's account of her using a nonviolent defense against a rapist, the thwarted rapist's side?" (Note, by the way, the facile juxtaposition of Bush and Saddam.)

Mock and Saraf are the exceptions—students who raise questions. One can begin to form a picture of the typical peace studies student by reading the testimonials by students and graduates that many of these programs have posted online. Essentially the same story occurs over and over in these accounts: the privileged upbringing; the curiosity about other cultures; the visit to the Third World, where the poverty shocks, even transforms, the student ("I . . . would never be the same after experiencing what I did in Honduras"); and, finally, the readiness to swallow the peace professors' explanation for it all—namely, that it's America's fault—and to work for revolutionary change. Many students make it clear that they're ashamed to be American; one of them, listing her aspirations, writes, "I envision myself American, not needing to be embarrassed of it." They view themselves instead as "global citizens."

The more one considers oneself a global citizen, of course, the less one considers oneself an American citizen whose loyalty is to the Constitution and its freedoms. Each new global citizen, in fact, transfers his loyalty to the Peace Racket. No wonder these students often sound like cultists: "I have pledged my passion, dedication, and undying energy to the World Peace Program and the ongoing fight for a more peaceful world for all people." They may think that they've figured out the world ("Global Militarism and Human Survival . . . has allowed me to analyze how the United States' military agenda denies indigenous rights and crushes people's hopes for social justice all over the world"), but all they're doing is regurgitating ideological clichés.

Reading these personal accounts, I remembered being 17. I'd never been outside North America, but I'd paid attention in history class and, being curious about the world, had read *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, *Babi Yar*, *1984*, John Gunther's *Inside* series, several books about the USSR, and much else. I had an uncle who'd been in a Nazi POW camp, a Polish-speaking grandmother who felt blessed to be an American citizen and not a Soviet vassal, and a Cuban schoolmate whose father, a journalist, Castro had tortured and blinded. I knew what totalitarianism was. The young people who get taken in by the Peace Racket, though, seem not to have had much of a clue about anything before visiting Haiti or Ghana or wherever. And their peace studies classes and international adventures don't exactly wise them up. A peace studies student at McGill University, recounting her internship with a "Cuban NGO" (as if there really were such a thing!), refers enthusiastically to her participation in "the largest demonstration in Cuban history." She doesn't elaborate, but the reference is clearly to a government-organized protest against the U.S. trade embargo. This perilously naive young woman has no idea that she was the tool of a dictatorship.

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For Canadian Davis Aurini, who in a May 2007 e-mail described himself as "sorely disappointed" by his peace studies experience, his naively socialist classmates were at least as problematic as the professors. One prof consistently ridiculed Western "science and knowledge": every time he quoted a Western writer, he would mockingly add, "So he told me," then clap his hands, then repeat, "So he *tooooold* me!" and clap his hands again. "He thought he was some kind of native spiritualist," explained Aurini. The classes were "nothing but a disjointed ramble against anything remotely military or Western. And the students loved it."

George Orwell would have understood the attraction of privileged young people to the Peace Racket. "Turn-the-other-cheek pacifism," he observed in 1941, "only flourishes among the more prosperous classes, or among workers who have in some way escaped from their own class. The real working class . . . are never really pacifist, because their life teaches them something different. To abjure violence it is necessary to have no experience of it." If so many young Americans have grown up insulated from the realities that Vegetius and Sun Tzu elucidated centuries ago, and are therefore easy marks for the Peace Racket, it's thanks to the success of the very things the Peace Racket despises above all—American capitalism and American military preparedness.

What's alarming is that these students don't plan to spend their lives on some remote mountainside in Nepal contemplating peace, harmony, and human oneness. They want to remake our world. They plan to become politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats, journalists, lawyers, teachers, activists. They'll bring to these positions all the mangled history and misbegotten ideology that their professors have handed down to them. Their careers will advance; the Peace Racket's influence will spread. And as it does, it will weaken freedom's foundations.

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An Inconvenient Solution

Carbon trading, the increasingly accepted answer to global warming, will cost far more than we're being told.

Nicole Gelinas

In a short time, global warming has graduated from niche cause to accepted fact. Though skeptics may still grumble (or shout) that the science isn't settled, they've lost the battle when President Bush agrees to "seriously consider" an international climate-change treaty; when media mogul Rupert Murdoch writes that "climate change poses clear, catastrophic threats"; when conservative standard-bearer *National Review* runs a cover article saying that "it's no longer possible, scientifically or politically, to deny that human activities have very likely increased global temperatures"; when Ford CEO Alan Mulally tells the *Detroit News* that "temperature has increased . . . mainly because of the greenhouse gases keeping the heat in"; and when *New York Times* everyman columnist Tom Friedman exhorts us to "go green." Al Gore—who, less than a decade ago, dropped his nearly career-spanning obsession with climate change, recognizing that no serious politician could make it the cornerstone of a presidential campaign—now has an Oscar for the global-warming documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. Some 84 percent of Americans think that human beings are contributing to global warming, with 78 percent (and 60 percent of Republicans) saying that we should do something about it "right away," according to an April *New York Times*/CBS News poll.

The political answer to all this anxiety has arrived. Prominent politicians—including first-tier

GILLES SABRIÉ/CORBIS

Cap and trade could force American firms to subsidize their heavy-polluting Chinese counterparts, like this Benxi steel mill, . . .

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Democratic and Republican presidential candidates—are embracing a national "cap and trade" program to cut greenhouse-gas emissions. Powerful corporate leaders are right behind them, and the few execs still on the sidelines privately say, as one put it, that national regulation of greenhouse gases—above all, carbon dioxide—"is now as certain as death and taxes." The mechanics of greenhouse-gas regulation are complex. But one likely result is all too clear: it will exact a significant toll on the American economy.

Cap and trade enjoys support from many free marketeers and moderate politicians because it seems, at first glance, market-friendly. If the perceived problem is power plants' and factories' heating up the planet by spewing too much carbon dioxide and other such gases into the air, why not impose a cost on them—currently, there isn't one—for those damaging emissions? Just as firms pay for the carbon (coal and natural gas) that they put into their operations, the argument goes, so they should pay for the carbon that comes out (carbon dioxide).

Here's how the cap-and-trade system likely would work. Assume that the government starts by capping greenhouse gases in two energy-hungry sectors of the economy: electricity generation and heavy industry. (Europe, seeking to comply with Kyoto Protocol environmental targets, has taken this route in its two-and-a-half-year-old cap-and-trade program.) To avoid too much shock, the government sets a generous cap in the program's first year. It asks every factory and power plant how many tons of greenhouse gases it released into the atmosphere during the previous year, and then makes the cumulative total—let's put it at 4 billion tons—the initial cap. Each plant or factory can emit exactly the same tonnage that it did in the previous year.

But the government doesn't just want to hold greenhouse gases steady; it wants to cut them by as much as half over the next half-century or so. So in five years, say the feds, the cap will go down by 5 percent overall, to 3.8 billion tons, and each company's cap will decline by the same proportion. After another five years, the government will cut the cap again, and so on. Because the companies know that the cap will keep tightening, they'll aim to make their operations more energy-efficient, or so the feds would hope.

But what if a factory can't reduce its emissions? Maybe it was pretty efficient already, and its customer orders are up, to boot. That's where the "trade" part of cap and trade comes in. Suppose that a power plant elsewhere does have room to cut energy waste—say, by replacing its 30-year-old generator with a cleaner model. Now that the power plant can produce the same total power with fewer emissions, it has extra greenhouse-gas permits and can—under the new regime—sell them to the humming factory, which needs to push past its own limit. What happens if all the firms in the country can't cut pollution enough to stay below the cap? Cap and trade has an answer for that scenario, too. Halfway around the world, in Guangdong, China, Mei Xiang Air Conditioners coughs up 10 million tons of greenhouse gases each year, but a simple upgrade would get emissions down to 8 million tons. Now, the Chinese plant can sell those 2 million tons' worth of emissions "savings" to its American counterparts for cold, hard cash—and use the money to pay for the upgrade.

Lawmakers have introduced nearly a half-dozen cap-and-trade bills in Congress this year, including one jointly sponsored by Senators John McCain, Barack Obama, and Joe Lieberman. Presidential candidates Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Rudy Giuliani have all expressed interest in the idea. "So much has happened so rapidly over the past 12 months," says Véronique Bugnion, head of North American research for Point Carbon, a group that analyzes Europe's carbon markets. And there's a chance that legislation won't even be necessary. This April, the Supreme Court ruled in *Massachusetts* v. *EPA* that the federal Environmental Protection Agency could regulate greenhouse-gas emissions as a pollutant, likely allowing the White House, should it someday wish, to implement a cap-and-trade program on its own.

Individual states aren't waiting. California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger wants the state to slash emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and the California legislature has passed a law to use "market mechanisms," like cap and trade, to start

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cutting emissions by 2012. Five western states, and one Canadian province, say that they'll join California's effort. On the opposite coast, New York governor Eliot Spitzer is proceeding with a ten-state cap-and-trade plan, announced by his predecessor George Pataki, that would decrease emissions by 10 percent over ten years, starting in 2009.

Corporations signing on in support of a national carbon cap-and-trade program read like the Fortune 500 list, from General Electric, which sells clean-energy technology, to PepsiCo. Some of the nation's largest electricity generators, including American Electric Power, North Carolina's Duke Energy, and Pacific Gas and Electric, have formally offered support. On the energy-voracious industrial side, there are General Motors, DuPont, Alcoa, Caterpillar, and Deere. Oil firms BP, ConocoPhillips, and Shell have also given thumbs-up.

"Cap and trade enjoys support from free marketeers because it seems, at first glance, market-friendly."

Pragmatism partly explains the corporate support. Some power-industry firms see that public and political opinion is changing, and they know that the faster they sign on to proposed regulation, the more opportunities they'll have to shape it so that it's less harmful to them. For example, as in Europe, American power-company execs would like to see a generous initial cap and want to make sure that they can pass on to customers the cost of buying emissions allowances on the trading market.

Many corporate leaders also think that the alternative to cap and trade is a snarl of even costlier litigation, as trial lawyers and state attorneys general try to convince juries that greenhouse-gas-spewing companies unleashed natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. A suit filed last year by California's then–attorney general, Bill Lockyer, against Detroit automakers, alleging that they're worsening global warming on the West Coast, is a preview. "The sooner we have a price on carbon, the better," says Duke Energy spokesman Thomas Williams.

Executives and politicians certainly prefer a cap-and-trade program to a carbon tax, which is another policy option. With a tax, power companies and industrial energy consumers would suddenly face a huge, nonnegotiable cost to doing business. Under cap and trade, by contrast, a plant operator unable to spend tens of millions of dollars to upgrade his plant might find it cheaper to buy carbon credits from a company that can slash emissions more readily. As for the pols, proposing a cap-and-trade program, which most people won't even understand, doesn't carry the same electoral risk as suggesting a new tax.

Many investment banks also favor a national cap-and-trade program, at least informally, anticipating the opportunity to trade a whole new asset class on the financial markets—assets worth from $50 billion to $300 billion annually, depending on economists' estimates of the eventual price per ton of emitting carbon. Lehman Brothers has joined American Electric Power and other companies in a voluntary pilot effort, the Chicago Climate Exchange, to cap and trade carbon in the United States. A competitor, the New York Mercantile Exchange, soon will offer standardized carbon-emissions contracts, too. And many other companies, ranging from niche start-ups to GE, support the idea, recognizing the potential for investing in emissions-credits projects in the Third World. Attend a meeting with the i-banking and power-industry players looking at this emerging market, and you'll see that all of them think mandatory cap and trade all but a done deal. They're already planning financial and investment products based on it for five to ten years down the road.

Soothing economic reports make support for cap and trade all the easier. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for

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example, says that the world could reduce future greenhouse-gas emissions without suffering much economically. Costs, it believes, would equal at most a tenth of a percentage point of global annual growth. The Energy Information Administration at the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that cutting greenhouse-gas growth less aggressively would eat up under half a percent of America's annual GDP by 2030. These figures beguile policymakers. If global warming is so cheap to fix, why not?

While cap and trade is an elegant system on paper, politicians and most of the public don't seem to grasp that it will be much messier and costlier in practice. Any program strict enough to cut emissions growth—never mind slashing emissions!—will raise power prices in America, plain and simple. In fact, hiking power prices is really the point of any carbon cap-and-trade program. We'd be taking a huge competitive advantage—much of our power is cheap and plentiful and not dependent on international fuels—and transforming it through regulation into a disadvantage.

Keep in mind that half of America's power comes from coal. Coal is dirty, but it has been good for us economically. Building and running an old-fashioned coal-fired electricity plant is more than 35 percent cheaper, per kilowatt of power produced, than building and running a natural-gas-fired plant, which emits far less carbon dioxide, and nearly 20 percent cheaper than a nuclear plant, which emits no carbon dioxide, according to Tufts University economics professor Gilbert Metcalf. Coal also costs less than wind or solar—by 40 percent and 70 percent, respectively—even though they're subsidized by tax credits. Nor do we need to worry about running out of coal or reeling from an international supply shock. We've got at least several hundred years' worth of the stuff right here in the U.S.

From an environmental perspective, though, coal is *too* plentiful and cheap, making it hard for cleaner energy to compete with it. The only way to make it cost more—and thus begin the process of weaning us off it—is through regulation. And over time, that's exactly what a carbon cap-and-trade program does. Because burning coal creates so much carbon, coal-fired power plants would have to pay far more than cleaner competitors to continue business as usual as the government tightened the cap.

How much would power prices go up if carbon emissions were no longer free? The Energy Information Administration estimates that under a plan cutting expected emissions growth by half by 2030, the price of electricity after inflation would be higher than it would otherwise be by 4 to 6 percent by 2020 and by 11 to 13 percent by 2030, as power companies spent money both upgrading power plants and buying the emissions credits that they'd need should they choose not to upgrade. Carbon cap and trade has pushed wholesale power prices in Europe up 5 to 10 percent just since 2005, says Phil Hare, director of U.K.-based Pöyry Energy Consulting. And if Europe lowers its initially generous cap enough to encourage companies to switch permanently from coal to gas power plants, prices could rise 20 to 40 percent over a decade or so.

But prices also would depend on political decisions. The first, naturally, is how generous the government would be with its total carbon cap. Another involves determining which emissions-reductions projects in the developing world investors can fund to get carbon credits. Europe has allowed the United Nations to make some of those decisions, but given the UN's rampant cronyism, its participation almost guarantees opaque political favoritism. Under what circumstances could the friends, fathers-in-law, and various hangers-on of UN delegates *not* think it's a great idea to launch dubious businesses investing in clean energy?

The UN carbon-credits program has already proven wildly inefficient. In an article in February's *Nature*, Michael Wara, a Stanford sustainable-development program veteran, noted that the UN initiative is spending billions of dollars in Western carbon-credits money to do work that

. . . and make cheap, plentiful domestic coal much more expensive.

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should cost much less, and may be contributing to the problem instead of solving it. In fact, upgrading refrigerant plants, a popular way of winning carbon credits to sell in the European market, is so cheap and easy that many Third World firms were doing it voluntarily until the cap-and-trade West started paying them to do it. And now there's evidence that some firms may be purposely increasing emissions just so that they can win Western money to decrease them.

Then there's Russia, which hasn't joined Europe's cap-and-trade program but would enjoy a huge competitive advantage if it did. Each country's cap is based on the Kyoto Protocol's recommendations. Kyoto calls for Russia to cut emissions to 1990 levels—but the country's economic decline means that it already emits far less carbon now than it did then. The likely result: tens of billions of dollars' worth of extra emissions credits to trade in Europe's market. "Russia is the Saudi Arabia of carbon," a spokesman for Gazprom, the nation's natural-gas company, told the *New York Times* in April. And Russia's abundance of credits would let it influence prices by affecting supply, just as the Saudis try to do with oil prices. In a global carbon market like that envisioned by many multinational companies and trading firms, Russia's decisions on how many carbon credits to release into the market would help determine how much a New York power company paid for its greenhouse-gas allowances. A global carbon market, in other words, could make the price of American coal-fired electricity dependent on global forces, just as oil prices are.

American companies and consumers would also feel the squeeze of the phenomenon called NIMBY: "Not in my backyard!" The feds' Energy Information Administration assumes that American power companies would respond to the new cost of carbon by readily switching from dirty coal to cleaner technologies such as nuclear, natural gas, and biomass. It predicts that the nation's power producers would boost nuclear generation by 50 percent over the next 23 years—five times the growth expected without a cap—and increase natural-gas output 20 percent above the level expected without a cap. But this happy scenario requires politicians to let power companies build new plants. Often, the very same pols backing cap and trade don't want any company to build property-value-destroying, voter-repellent power plants in their constituents' backyards.

Nuclear energy, for instance, is already an established way to produce mass-scale power for a reasonable cost. But no company has started up a nuclear plant in America in three decades, partly because fierce local and state government opposition makes it nearly impossible. In New York, Governor Eliot Spitzer wants to cap carbon emissions, even though the state's power prices are already 57 percent above the national average. But at the same time, he hopes to close the downstate region's only operating nuclear plant, Westchester County's Indian Point, "as soon as replacement power is available." If New York caps emissions and encourages power companies to build more nuclear plants, power prices will go up to pay for the new construction. But if New York caps emissions *and* effectively caps new generation by discouraging power companies from building nuclear plants, prices will go *way* up. Financiers also hesitate to back new nuclear plants, because Washington opponents—these days led by Nevada Democrat and Senate majority leader Harry Reid—have stalled on building a permanent fuel-waste storage site in a remote area of Nevada.

Natural gas is a second cleaner alternative to coal. But natural-gas power plants, even if companies get to build them, need, well, natural gas, and our domestic production falls short of growing demand. To import gas, we'd have to build more natural-gas terminals on our coastlines—where, citizens fear, terrorists might blow them up. Earlier this year, Chevron canceled plans to build a terminal off the California coast, after years of resistance; on the East Coast, politicians on Long Island and in Rhode Island have stubbornly opposed terminals.

Wind meets with NIMBY resistance, too. Last year, Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy maneuvered to block the proposed Cape Wind power farm off Hyannis, saying that it would hurt navigation and tourism. Consultants

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studying an upstate New York project found that windmills had killed hundreds of bats and migrating birds over a period of five months.

Many cap-and-trade supporters, joined by coal-mining interests, point to newfangled "clean" coal technology as a catchall solution, claiming that it would allow us to exploit our coal supplies while lowering emissions. Clean coal could replace regular old dirty coal to make electricity, it's true, but it would involve either gasifying the coal instead of pulverizing it, so that it burned more cleanly; or capturing and storing carbon emissions from the plant, most likely underground, so that they didn't escape into the atmosphere; or both.

"Some firms may be increasing emissions just so that they can win Western money to decrease them."

The technology and expense of such new approaches are uncertain. Michael Rencheck, senior vice president of engineering at American Electric Power, supports a cap-and-trade program but estimates that the cost of producing electricity at the first type of cleaner-coal plant would be at least 20 percent higher than at a conventional one. Capturing and storing the carbon, Rencheck believes, would cost 60 to 70 percent more than old-fashioned coal generation. If and when the technology works, the price will fall, but that could be decades away.

The political and legal hurdles to making coal plants cleaner might dwarf the technical issues, says James Liles, a regulatory advisor with the Milbank, Tweed law firm who also supports cap and trade. While it's quite possible, he explains, for power-plant operators to lay underground pipelines to depleted natural-gas fields, where they could store carbon emissions, such an undertaking would cost tens of billions of dollars and involve heavy construction work near hundreds of power plants, "many located in densely populated areas far away from any fields." Because of inevitable state and local opposition, property-rights rows at now-dormant gas fields, and investor worries about technical glitches and legal liability, it's likely that the feds would need to coordinate, and perhaps financially guarantee, the first few carbon-storage projects.

The biggest problem with cap and trade, however, is that it collides with the reality of global competition. We live not in a world of united nations, where the environment comes first, but in a cutthroat competitive economy, where small changes in certain prices can determine, say, whether a businessman keeps his manufacturing plant in upstate New York or places his orders instead with a factory in China. Developing nations won't voluntarily give up a major competitive advantage—cheaper power—should we hand it to them. Can what's left of New York's industry, for example, stomach a 10 percent or greater increase in the price of power, without sending more jobs offshore?

Even if we decide to hurt ourselves economically to save the world, helping China and India and other less developed countries become more energy-efficient won't reduce the planet's global-warming emissions anyway. Over the past 25 years, for instance, because China has been growing and modernizing its economy, it has actually decreased its carbon inefficiency by nearly two-thirds. But as China's corporations and citizens grow richer, they use more carbon even as they get more efficient, using the profits from their newfound productivity to buy energy-gobbling automobiles and dishwashers. (As the Manhattan Institute's Peter Huber explains, Americans similarly take advantage of higher energy efficiency by using more electricity to do once-unheard-of new things, such as charging cell phones.)

If America's politicians and corporate leaders truly believe that much of the world will suffer irrevocable damage from climate change within

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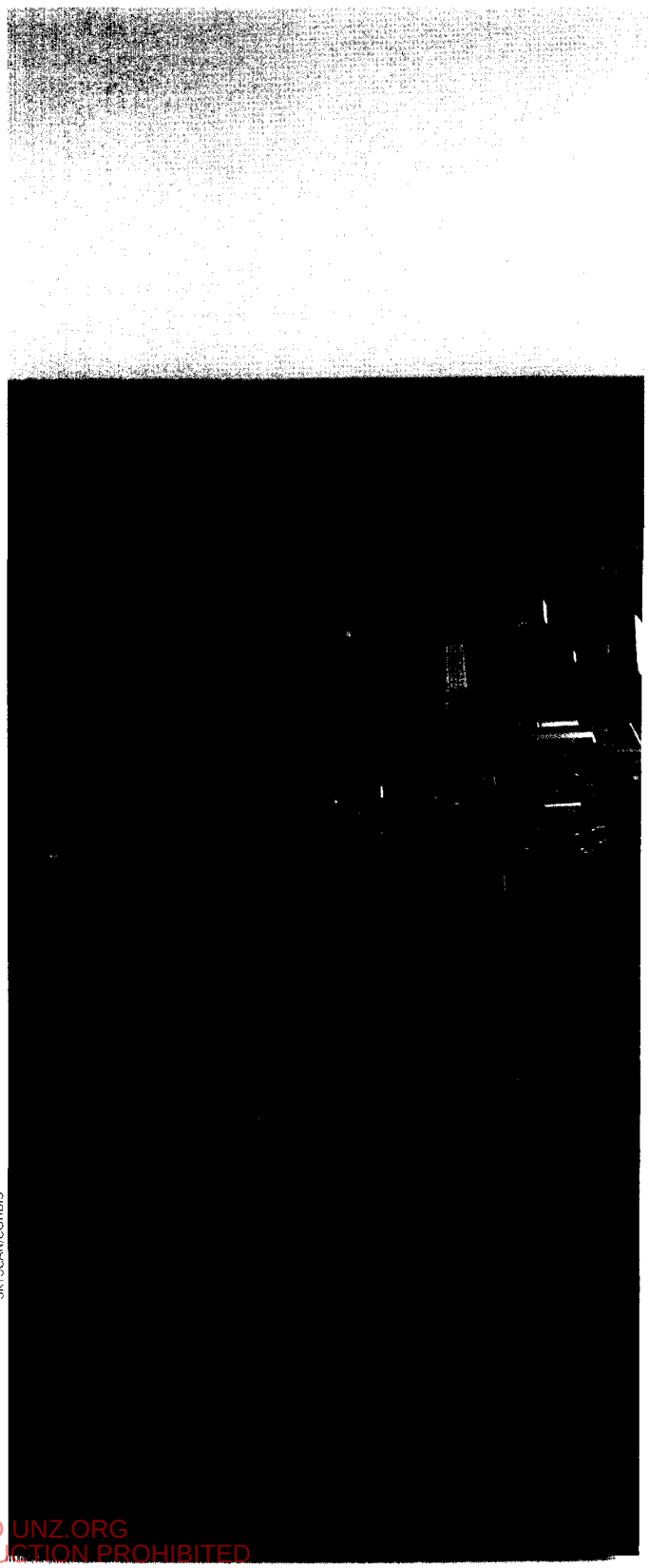
the next century, then obviously we should try to stop it. But the first step shouldn't be a feel-good cap-and-trade regime. Federal, state, and local government should instead work together to remove all obstacles that prevent private companies from building new nuclear power plants, since it's foolish not to take immediate advantage of a proven, cost-competitive alternative to dirty coal.

After taking that obvious step, pols and business leaders should do a gut check. Are they so certain of the catastrophic effects of climate change that they would support a straightforward emissions tax, rather than a carbon cap-and-trade program that (deceptively) seems so easy? After all, strip away the rhetoric about cap and trade, and it would have the same effect as a tonnage tax on carbon emissions: making such emissions more expensive; discouraging carbon-intensive power generation; and allowing the market to decide which environmentally friendlier technologies—solar, wind, what have you—would be competitive enough to take its place.

The pols and business leaders could suggest that America gradually impose such a tax, one that's high enough within a decade to encourage industries and consumers to switch permanently to cleaner technology. A tax would mean higher power prices, too, but at least it wouldn't mean directly subsidizing competitors abroad. And the feds could use the tax's revenue to reduce taxes elsewhere in the economy—perhaps cutting dividend and capital-gains taxes further, to encourage the massive private investment needed to build the next generation of power generators. Nor would a tax create a new multi-billion-dollar global commodity whose value could depend on political manipulation in dark corners of the world.

If it's true that a consensus about global warming really exists, not just in press releases and on op-ed pages but in the back rooms of power, too, the politicians and the business leaders wouldn't be afraid to suggest such a tax. They would insist on it.



SKYSCAN/CORBIS

A convenient solution to carbon emissions: build more nuclear power plants, like this one in Suffolk, England.

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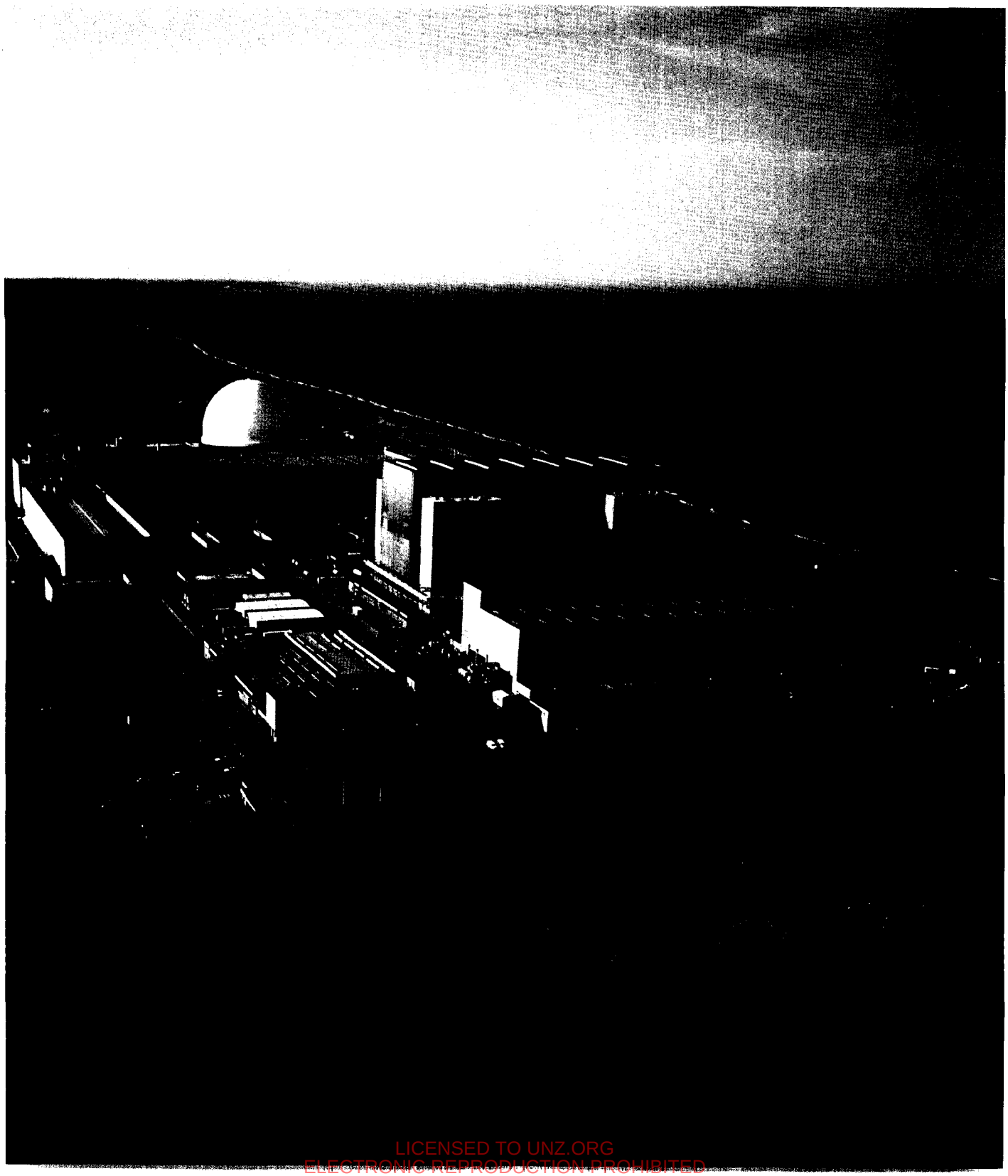

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The Ugly Truth About Canadian Health Care

Socialized medicine has meant rationed care and lack of innovation. Small wonder Canadians are looking to the market.

David Gratzer

Mountain-bike enthusiast Suzanne Aucoin had to fight more than her Stage IV colon cancer. Her doctor suggested Erbitux—a proven cancer drug that targets cancer cells exclusively, unlike conventional chemotherapies that more crudely kill all fast-growing cells in the body—and Aucoin went to a clinic to begin treatment. But if Erbitux offered hope, Aucoin's insurance didn't: she received one inscrutable form letter after another, rejecting her claim for reimbursement. Yet another example of the callous hand of managed care, depriving someone of needed medical help, right? Guess again. Erbitux is standard treatment, covered by insurance companies—in the United States. Aucoin lives in Ontario, Canada.

When Aucoin appealed to an official ombudsman, the Ontario government claimed that her treatment was unproven and that she had gone to an unaccredited clinic. But the FDA in the U.S. had approved Erbitux, and her clinic was a cancer center affiliated with a prominent Catholic hospital in Buffalo. This January, the ombudsman ruled in Aucoin's favor, awarding her the cost of treatment. She represents a dramatic new trend in Canadian health-care advocacy: finding the treatment you need in another country, and then fighting Canadian bureaucrats (and often suing) to get them to pick up the tab.

But if Canadians are looking to the United States for the care they need, Americans, ironically, are increasingly looking north for a viable health-care model. There's no question that American health care, a mixture of private insurance and public programs, is a mess. Over the last five years, health-insurance premiums have more than doubled, leaving firms like General Motors on the brink of bankruptcy. Expensive health care has also hit workers in the pocketbook: it's one of the reasons that median family income fell between 2000 and 2005 (despite a rise in overall labor costs). Health spending has surged past 16 percent of GDP. The number of uninsured Americans has risen, and even the insured seem dissatisfied. So it's not surprising that some Americans think that solving the nation's health-care woes may require adopting a Canadian-style single-payer system, in which the government finances and provides the care. Canadians, the seductive single-payer tune goes, not only spend less on health care; their health outcomes are better, too—life expectancy is longer, infant mortality lower.

Thus, Paul Krugman in the *New York Times*: "Does this mean that the American way is wrong, and that we should switch to a Canadian-style single-payer system? Well, yes." Politicians like Hillary Clinton are on board; Michael Moore's new documentary *Sicko* celebrates the virtues of Canada's socialized health care; the National Coalition on Health Care, which includes big businesses like AT&T, recently endorsed a scheme to centralize major health decisions to a government committee; and big unions are questioning the tenets of employer-sponsored health insurance.

Some are tempted. Not me.

I was once a believer in socialized medicine. I don't want to overstate my case: growing up in Canada, I didn't spend much time contemplating the nuances of health economics. I wanted to get into medical school—my mind brimmed with statistics on MCAT scores and admissions

PAUL CHIASSON/CP PHOTO

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An overcrowded emergency room in Montreal—a familiar sight in Canadian hospitals

rates, not health spending. But as a Canadian, I had soaked up three things from my environment: a love of ice hockey; an ability to convert Celsius into Fahrenheit in my head; and the belief that government-run health care was truly compassionate. What I knew about American health care was unappealing: high expenses and lots of uninsured people. When HillaryCare shook Washington, I remember thinking that the Clintonistas were right.

My health-care prejudices crumbled not in the classroom but on the way to one. On a subzero Winnipeg morning in 1997, I cut across the hospital emergency room to shave a few minutes off my frigid commute. Swinging open the door, I stepped into a nightmare: the ER overflowed with elderly people on stretchers, waiting for admission. Some, it turned out, had waited *five days*. The air stank with sweat and urine. Right then, I began to reconsider everything that I thought I knew about Canadian health care. I soon discovered that the problems went well beyond overcrowded ERs. Patients had to wait for practically any diagnostic test or procedure, such as the man with persistent pain from a hernia operation whom we referred to a pain clinic—with a three-year wait list; or the woman needing a sleep study to diagnose what seemed like sleep apnea, who faced a two-year delay; or the woman with breast cancer who needed to wait four months for radiation therapy, when the standard of care was four weeks.

I decided to write about what I saw. By day, I attended classes and visited patients; at night, I worked on a book. Unfortunately, statistics on Canadian health care's weaknesses were hard to come by, and even finding people willing to criticize the system was difficult, such was the emotional support that it then enjoyed. One family friend, diagnosed with cancer, was told to wait for potentially lifesaving chemotherapy. I called to see if I could write about his plight. Worried about repercussions, he asked me to change his name. A bit later, he asked if I could change his sex in the story, and maybe his town. Finally, he asked if I could change the illness, too.

My book's thesis was simple: to contain rising costs, government-run health-care systems invariably restrict the health-care supply. Thus, at a time when Canada's population was aging and needed more care, not less, cost-crunching bureaucrats had reduced the size of medical school classes, shuttered hospitals, and capped physician fees, resulting in hundreds of thousands of patients waiting for needed treatment—patients who suffered and, in some cases, died

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from the delays. The only solution, I concluded, was to move away from government command-and-control structures and toward a more market-oriented system. To capture Canadian health care's growing crisis, I called my book *Code Blue*, the term used when a patient's heart stops and hospital staff must leap into action to save him. Though I had a hard time finding a Canadian publisher, the book eventually came out in 1999 from a small imprint; it struck a nerve, going through five printings.

Nor were the problems I identified unique to Canada—they characterized all government-run health-care systems. Consider the recent British controversy over a cancer patient who tried to get an appointment with a specialist, only to have it canceled—48 times. More than 1 million Britons must wait for some type of care, with 200,000 in line for longer than six months. A while back, I toured a public hospital in Washington, D.C., with Tim Evans, a senior fellow at the Centre for the New Europe. The hospital was dark and dingy, but Evans observed that it was cleaner than anything in his native England. In France, the supply of doctors is so limited that during an August 2003 heat wave—when many doctors were on vacation and hospitals were stretched beyond capacity—15,000 elderly citizens died. Across Europe, state-of-the-art drugs aren't available. And so on.

But single-payer systems—confronting dirty hospitals, long waiting lists, and substandard treatment—are starting to crack. Today my book wouldn't seem so provocative to Canadians, whose views on public health care are much less rosy than they were even a few years ago. Canadian newspapers are now filled with stories of people frustrated by long delays for care:

> VOW BROKEN ON CANCER WAIT TIMES: MOST HOSPITALS ACROSS CANADA FAIL TO MEET OTTAWA'S FOUR-WEEK GUIDELINE FOR RADIATION
>
> PATIENTS WAIT AS P.E.T. SCANS USED IN ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS
>
> BACK PATIENTS WAITING YEARS FOR TREATMENT: STUDY
>
> THE DOCTOR IS . . . OUT

As if a taboo had lifted, government statistics on the health-care system's problems are suddenly available. In fact, government researchers have provided the best data on the doctor shortage, noting, for example, that more than 1.5 million Ontarians (or 12 percent of that province's population) can't find family physicians. Health officials in one Nova Scotia community actually resorted to a lottery to determine who'd get a doctor's appointment.

Dr. Jacques Chaoulli is at the center of this changing health-care scene. Standing at about five and a half feet and soft-spoken, he doesn't seem imposing. But this accidental revolutionary has turned Canadian health care on its head. In the 1990s, recognizing the growing crisis of socialized care, Chaoulli organized a private Quebec practice—patients called him, he made house calls, and then he directly billed his patients. The local health board cried foul and began fining him. The legal status of private practice in Canada remained murky, but billing patients, rather than the government, was certainly illegal, and so was private insurance.

Chaoulli gave up his private practice but not the fight for private medicine. Trying to draw attention to Canada's need for an alternative to government care, he began a hunger strike but quit after a month, famished but not famous. He wrote a couple of books on the topic, which sold dismally. He then came up with the idea of challenging the government in court. Because the lawyers whom he consulted dismissed the idea, he decided to make the legal case himself and enrolled in law school. He flunked out after a term. Undeterred, he found a sponsor for his legal fight (his father-in-law, who lives in Japan) and a patient to represent. Chaoulli went to court and lost. He appealed and lost again. He appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. And there—amazingly—he won.

Chaoulli was representing George Zeliotis, an elderly Montrealer forced to wait almost a year for a hip replacement. Zeliotis was in agony and taking high doses of opiates. Chaoulli maintained that the patient should have the right to pay for private health insurance and get treatment sooner. He based his argument on the Canadian equivalent of the Bill of Rights, as well

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as on the equivalent Quebec charter. The court hedged on the national question, but a majority agreed that Quebec's charter did implicitly recognize such a right.

It's hard to overstate the shock of the ruling. It caught the government completely off guard—officials had considered Chaoulli's case so weak that they hadn't bothered to prepare briefing notes for the prime minister in the event of his victory. The ruling wasn't just shocking, moreover; it was potentially monumental, opening the way to more private medicine in Quebec. Though the prohibition against private insurance holds in the rest of the country for now, at least two people outside Quebec, armed with Chaoulli's case as precedent, are taking their demand for private insurance to court.

Rick Baker helps people, and sometimes even saves lives. He describes a man who had a seizure and received a diagnosis of epilepsy. Dissatisfied with the opinion—he had no family history of epilepsy, but he did have constant headaches and nausea, which aren't usually seen in the disorder—the man requested an MRI. The government told him that the wait would be four and a half months. So he went to Baker, who arranged to have the MRI done within 24 hours—and who, after the test discovered a brain tumor, arranged surgery within a few weeks.

Baker isn't a neurosurgeon or even a doctor. He's a medical broker, one member of a private sector that is rushing in to address the inadequacies of Canada's government care. Canadians pay him to set up surgical procedures, diagnostic tests, and specialist consultations, privately and quickly. "I don't have a medical background. I just have some common sense," he explains. "I don't need to be a doctor for what I do. I'm just expediting care."

He tells me stories of other people whom his British Columbia–based company, Timely Medical Alternatives, has helped—people like the elderly woman who needed vascular surgery for a major artery in her abdomen and was promised prompt care by one of the most senior bureaucrats in the government, who never called back. "Her doctor told her she's going to die," Baker remembers. So Timely got her surgery in a couple of days, in Washington State. Then there was the eight-year-old badly in need of a procedure to help correct her deafness. After watching her surgery get bumped three times, her parents called Timely. She's now back at school, her hearing partly restored. "The father said, 'Mr. Baker, my wife and I are in agreement that your star shines the brightest in our heaven,' " Baker recalls. "I told that story to a government official. He shrugged. He couldn't fucking care less."

Not everyone has kind words for Baker. A woman from a union-sponsored health coalition, writing in a local paper, denounced him for "profiting from people's misery." When I bring up the comment, he snaps: "I'm profiting from *relieving* misery." Some of the services that Baker brokers almost certainly contravene Canadian law, but governments are loath to stop him. "What I am doing could be construed as civil disobedience," he says. "There comes a time when people need to lead the government."

Baker isn't alone: other private-sector health options are blossoming across Canada, and the government is increasingly turning a blind eye to them, too, despite their often uncertain legal status. Private clinics are opening at a rate of about one a week. Companies like MedCan now offer "corporate medicals" that include an array of diagnostic tests and a referral to Johns Hopkins, if necessary. Insurance firms sell critical-illness insurance, giving policyholders a lump-sum payment in the event of a major diagnosis; since such policyholders could, in theory, spend the money on anything they wanted, medical or not, the system doesn't count as health insurance and is therefore legal. Testifying to the changing nature of Canadian health care, Baker observes that securing prompt care used to mean a trip south. These days, he says, he's able to get 80 percent of his clients care in Canada, via the private sector.

Another sign of transformation: Canadian doctors, long silent on the health-care system's problems, are starting to speak up. Last August, they voted Brian Day president of their national association. A former socialist who counts Fidel

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Castro as a personal acquaintance, Day has nevertheless become perhaps the most vocal critic of Canadian public health care, having opened his own private surgery center as a remedy for long waiting lists and then challenged the government to shut him down. "This is a country in which dogs can get a hip replacement in under a week," he fumed to the *New York Times*, "and in which humans can wait two to three years."

And now even Canadian governments are looking to the private sector to shrink the waiting lists. Day's clinic, for instance, handles workers'-compensation cases for employees of both public and private corporations. In British Columbia, private clinics perform roughly 80 percent of government-funded diagnostic testing. In Ontario, where fealty to socialized medicine has always been strong, the government recently hired a private firm to staff a rural hospital's emergency room.

This privatizing trend is reaching Europe, too. Britain's government-run health care dates back to the 1940s. Yet the Labour Party—which originally created the National Health Service and used to bristle at the suggestion of private medicine, dismissing it as "Americanization"—now openly favors privatization. Sir William Wells, a senior British health official, recently said: "The big trouble with a state monopoly is that it builds in massive inefficiencies and inward-looking culture." Last year, the private sector provided about 5 percent of Britain's nonemergency procedures; Labour aims to triple that percentage by 2008. The Labour government also works to voucherize certain surgeries, offering patients a choice of four providers, at least one private. And in a recent move, the government will contract out some primary care services, perhaps to American firms such as UnitedHealth Group and Kaiser Permanente.

Sweden's government, after the completion of the latest round of privatizations, will be contracting out some 80 percent of Stockholm's primary care and 40 percent of its total health services, including one of the city's largest hospitals. Since the fall of Communism, Slovakia has looked to liberalize its state-run system, introducing co-payments and privatizations. And modest market reforms have begun in Germany: increasing co-pays, enhancing insurance competition, and turning state enterprises over to the private sector (within a decade, only a minority of German hospitals will remain under state control). It's important to note that change in these countries is slow and gradual—market reforms remain controversial. But if the United States was once the exception for viewing a vibrant private sector in health care as essential, it is so no longer.

Yet even as Stockholm and Saskatoon are percolating with the ideas of Adam Smith, a growing number of prominent Americans are arguing that socialized health care still provides better results for less money. "Americans tend to believe that we have the best health care system in the world," writes Krugman in the *New York Times*. "But it isn't true. We spend far more per person on health care . . . yet rank near the bottom among industrial countries in indicators from life expectancy to infant mortality."

One often hears variations on Krugman's argument—that America lags behind other countries in crude health outcomes. But such outcomes reflect a mosaic of factors, such as diet, lifestyle, drug use, and cultural values. It pains me as a doctor to say this, but health care is just one factor in health. Americans live 75.3 years on average, fewer than Canadians (77.3) or the French (76.6) or the citizens of any Western European nation save Portugal. Health care influences life expectancy, of course. But a life can end because of a murder, a fall, or a car accident. Such factors aren't academic—homicide rates in the United States are much higher than in other countries (eight times higher than in France, for instance). In *The Business of Health*, Robert Ohsfeldt and John Schneider factor out intentional and unintentional injuries from life-expectancy statistics and find that Americans who don't die in car crashes or homicides *outlive* people in any other Western country.

And if we measure a health-care system by how well it serves its sick citizens, American

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Frustrated Canadians increasingly seek treatment at private clinics, like this one in British Columbia.

medicine excels. Five-year cancer survival rates bear this out. For leukemia, the American survival rate is almost 50 percent; the European rate is just 35 percent. Esophageal carcinoma: 12 percent in the United States, 6 percent in Europe. The survival rate for prostate cancer is 81.2 percent here, yet 61.7 percent in France and down to 44.3 percent in England—a striking variation.

Like many critics of American health care, though, Krugman argues that the costs are just too high: "In 2002 . . . the United States spent $5,267 on health care for each man, woman, and child." Health-care spending in Canada and Britain, he notes, is a small fraction of that. Again, the picture isn't quite as clear as he suggests; because the U.S. is so much wealthier than other countries, it isn't unreasonable for it to spend more on health care. Take America's high spending on research and development. M. D. Anderson in Texas, a prominent cancer center, spends more on research than Canada does.

That said, American health care is expensive. And Americans aren't always getting a good deal. In the coming years, with health expenses spiraling up, it will be easy for some—like the zealous legislators in California—to give in to the temptation of socialized medicine. In Washington, there are plenty of old pieces of legislation that like-minded politicians could take off the shelf, dust off, and promote: expanding Medicare to Americans 55 and older, say, or covering all children in Medicaid.

But such initiatives would push the United States further down the path to a government-run system and make things much, much worse. True, government bureaucrats would be able to cut costs—but only by shrinking access to health care, as in Canada, and engendering a Canadian-style nightmare of overflowing emergency rooms and yearlong waits for treatment. America is right to seek a model for delivering good health care at good prices, but we should be looking not to Canada, but close to home—in the other four-fifths or so of our economy. From telecommunications to retail, deregulation and market competition have driven prices down and quality and productivity up. Health care is long overdue for the same prescription.

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Grading Mayoral Control

Lauded in the press, Bloomberg's education reforms are proving more spin than substance. Parents are losing patience.

Sol Stern

Mayoral control, the hot new trend in urban school reform, began in Boston and Chicago in the 1990s. Now it's the New York City school system, under the authority of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, that's become the beacon for education-mayor wannabes like Adrian Fenty of Washington, D.C., and Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles. Influential philanthropic foundations, such as the Los Angeles–based Broad Foundation (headed by Bloomberg friend and fellow billionaire Eli Broad) and the Gates Foundation, are investing in Bloomberg as the model big-city mayor who uses his new executive powers over the schools to advance a daring reform agenda. Meanwhile, the national media's positive coverage of mayoral control in Gotham is adding to the luster of a possible Bloomberg presidential run.

For New Yorkers, though, the original appeal of mayoral control was entirely parochial. The old Board of Education—with seven members, appointed by six elected city officials—offered a case study of the paralysis that sets in when fragmented political authority tries to direct a dysfunctional bureaucracy. New Yorkers arrived at a consensus that there was not much hope of lifting student achievement substantially under such a regime. The newly elected Bloomberg made an offer that they couldn't refuse: *Give me the authority to improve the schools, and then hold me accountable for the results.*

So on June 12, 2002, Bloomberg appeared at the mayoral-control bill-signing ceremony alongside Governor George Pataki. The bill would "give the school system the one thing it fundamentally needs: accountability," said Bloomberg. The new governance system won enthusiastic support across the political spectrum, from conservative think tanks to the *New York Times* and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), whose members got a huge pay raise.

Just five years later, that consensus has fractured. Some state legislators representing the city, including influential Assembly education-committee chair Catherine Nolan, promise a tough review process when reauthorization of mayoral control comes up in 2008. There's also a significant demographic divide on the benefits of the reform. Business leaders, editorial boards, and many education experts remain enthusiastic. Constituents at the grass roots, however, feel increasingly frustrated. More than two dozen parent groups and district education councils have passed resolutions opposing Schools Chancellor Joel Klein's latest school reorganization plans. According to the Quinnipiac poll of city residents, Klein's favorability rating has fallen to just 37 percent, and a majority of New Yorkers want something like an independent board of education or a commission with oversight powers.

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Stirring public unease is the realization that what Bloomberg really meant by accountability was one election, one time. If you didn't like the way that mayoral control was working under Bloomberg, you could vote for Democrat Freddy Ferrer in the 2005 mayoral election (Bloomberg's last, because of term limits). But what could you do *after* that election? Bloomberg's suggestion: "Boo me at parades."

The arrogance of that response demonstrates how little Bloomberg really seems to care about accountability. In fact, his Department of Education routinely undermines accountability with a public-relations juggernaut that deflects legitimate criticism of his education policies, dominates the mainstream press, uses the schools as campaign props, and, most ominously, distorts student test-score data. Without transparency, real accountability doesn't exist.

Admittedly, any mayor taking over the city's dysfunctional school system would need an effective information campaign to win public support for the wrenching changes necessary. But Bloomberg also wants to conquer new political frontiers. If he does run for president, it will be partly on his education record.

That ambition has driven the administration's media operations on education. It's why the Department of Education's communications office is 29-strong, four times as many employees as worked in the press office under the old Board of Ed. And that doesn't include the city hall press operation, which often joins in promoting new education initiatives, or the substantial public-relations and marketing services that the administration has received from companies, either pro bono or paid for by third-party private contributions.

Recently, for example, the Fund for Public Schools—ostensibly an independent, not-for-profit organization that raises private money for the schools—launched a two-month ad campaign bolstering administration claims that reading and math scores were rising and calling on New Yorkers to "help keep the progress going." The full-page ad that ran in the *New York Times* on June 7 didn't mention, though, that Klein was the

REUTERS/CORBIS

To critics of his education policies, Bloomberg says: "Boo me at parades."

fund's chairman or that the mayor's friends, including the Broad Foundation, had helped pay the $1 million cost of the ad campaign.

Such media spin has become so commonplace that it's producing a backlash among New Yorkers who might otherwise be on the mayor's side, such as David Bloomfield, president of the

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Education-minded mayors like L.A.'s Antonio Villaraigosa, center, crave the direct control of schools that Bloomberg enjoys.

citywide education council for high schools and a Brooklyn College professor who trains future public school principals. (He's also the author of a Manhattan Institute study advocating charter school legislation.) An early mayoral-control enthusiast, Bloomfield was recently asked by an education department official to make suggestions for redesigning the department's website. His response: "The website should be transformed from a mayoral campaign vehicle to something really useful to parents and other members of the public. . . . Instead it's all buttercups-and-roses, smoke and mirrors. Why is there never any bad news? Just press releases on the home page taking credit for the sun rising. . . . The website is a perfect example of what makes everyone so mad about the way the Mayor has handled the schools: data manipulation, grandiose claims, and almost no way to find out that a third (or is it more?) of our schools are failing under No Child Left Behind."

The most notorious case of Bloomberg's data manipulation occurred during the 2005 mayoral race. In May of that year, city hall bused education reporters to P.S. 33, a poor, predominantly minority school in the Bronx, where Bloomberg congratulated the children, their teachers, and Principal Elba Lopez on a miracle: 83 percent of the school's fourth-graders scored at grade level on the 2005 reading test, compared with only 35.8 percent the previous year—an unheard-of one-year gain of close to 50 percentage points. The school's score was just 4 percentage points below the average for the state's richest suburban districts. Further, the mayor announced, the percentage of the city's

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fourth-graders passing the state's reading test had risen by a "record-breaking" 10 points in just one year.

If Bloomberg had really introduced accountability into the city's education system, the implausible P.S. 33 scores would have raised red flags at the education department and perhaps even prompted a fraud referral to the city's Special Commissioner of Investigations. Instead, the mayor got the political boost that he sought, with front-page headlines hailing the "historic" gains. Almost no commentary pointed out that fourth-grade reading scores rose by almost 10 percentage points in the rest of the state, too, suggesting that the 2005 test might have been easier than the previous year's.

"'Much of 2005's publicized record-setting increases were a phantom,' concludes analyst Fred Smith."

The "miracle" eventually unraveled, but only after Bloomberg's reelection. When the 2006 scores arrived, they showed that the P.S. 33 fourth-graders, now fifth-graders, had plummeted back to a pass rate of 41 percent on their reading tests. Principal Lopez, meantime, had retired, with a pensionable $15,000 bonus for her school's 2005 scores. After I published an article about the suspicious scores in the Autumn 2006 *City Journal*, and after Andrew Wolf published another one in the *New York Sun*, the DOE launched an internal investigation. Last December, Klein concluded that enough evidence of possible fraud existed to ask DOE counsel Michael Best to make a referral to the city's Special Commissioner of Investigations. But the counsel's office somehow forgot to do it, according to DOE press secretary David Cantor. The referral was finally made, but only after another inquiry by Wolf in early June.

Fred Smith, a former Board of Education statistical analyst, further discredited the 2005 reading scores in the *Sun*. Using information obtained from a Freedom of Information request, Smith concluded that 4 percentage points of the citywide 10-point test-score rise resulted from the DOE's exclusion of 2,170 students who spoke another language at home, and of another 3,000 students with reading difficulties who had been held back in third grade because of the administration's (salutary) new policy of ending social promotion. As Smith concluded, "Much of 2005's publicized record-setting increases were a phantom—a case of addition by subtraction."

But the DOE never looks back and never concedes error. In fact, Klein and his deputies now compound the previous distortions by boasting that on their watch, there has been an overall rise of 12 percentage points in the number of students passing the state's fourth-grade reading test. Even if true, it would be only a modest breakthrough, an average yearly increase of 2.5 percentage points. But it *isn't* true. The only way that the DOE can justify the claim is to borrow a 5.9-point reading-score increase that occurred between 2002 and 2003, credit for which ought to go to Klein's predecessor, Harold O. Levy, or to no chancellor at all.

Consider: Bloomberg took office on January 1, 2002, but he didn't win control of the schools until June 12 of that year. Klein wasn't appointed until August, and then he spent the rest of the year studying the system and appointing task forces to advise the administration on how to restructure the schools. By the time the chancellor finished studying, students were taking the 2003 fourth-grade reading test. The system was, in effect, operating on autopilot during the year that the students recorded the healthy 5.9 percentage-point improvement.

At the time, Klein knew that he couldn't convincingly claim credit for the 2003 test scores, and he didn't even hold a press conference to celebrate them. Four years later, the fourth-grade reading scores have inched up by another 7 percentage points, only half the average yearly increase achieved under the tenures of Chancellors

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Levy and Rudy Crew. But to avoid that invidious comparison, the mayor and the chancellor simply take the 2003 result and add it to their own column.

The administration has dissembled even more egregiously on math scores. Granted, the 2007 math tests brought some good news, with the city's fourth-graders improving by 3.2 percentage points—one point ahead of the state as a whole—and the city's eighth-graders bumping up by 6 percentage points, compared with the state's rise of 5 points. Once more, however, this modest gain wasn't good enough for the potential presidential candidate who wants to be known as the "education mayor." So the press release issued by city hall claimed that "since 2002, the first year of the Bloomberg administration," elementary- and middle-school math scores went up by a total of 27.8 percentage points. The release didn't mention that two-thirds of the fourth-grade gain was earned during the 2002–03 school year and, again, ought to have been credited to Levy or to no one. Further, the press release mixed up city and state test scores to arrive at its figure—a violation of every rule of psychometrics.

Education historian Diane Ravitch, author of the definitive history of the New York City public schools and a nationally recognized expert on testing and standards, finds this cooking of the books appalling. Says Ravitch: "Whenever new data appear about test scores or graduation rates, they are immediately massaged and packaged by the public-relations department at the Department of Education. With all its faults, the old Board of Education did have a research department, where conscientious, nonpartisan researchers tallied up the good news and the bad news and gave it straight to the public, without adding self-serving praise or toying with the interpretation of the numbers."

The only education numbers that can't be manipulated are those that tell how steeply education spending has increased under the Bloomberg-Klein regime. In the past four years, total expenditures on city schools from all sources—state, city, federal, and private—surged from $14 billion to $18 billion yearly, the greatest increase in history. The new funding allowed the system to hold the equivalent of 15 extra days of school per year and to hire thousands of extra teachers.

There's no denying that there have been some improvements since Bloomberg and Klein announced the first set of mayoral reforms in 2003. In addition to the gains already mentioned, eighth-grade reading scores, flat for the past eight years, jumped by 5 percentage points in 2007 (though scores went up by even higher amounts throughout the state, again suggesting an easier test). Fourth-grade math scores are up by a total of 7.7 percentage points overall in four years, and eighth-grade math scores are up by about 12 points. But considering the extra $4 billion spent, plus the 15 additional days of school, that hardly deserves to be regarded as a major achievement for either the mayor or the institution of mayoral control.

AP PHOTO

Even if the administration's claims about test scores were accurate, it would still be difficult to know which of its structural or instructional initiatives should get credit for the improvement. That's partly because Klein's Department of Education does no research on which programs work and which do not, and partly because within just three years, he and Bloomberg have flip-flopped on their plans for the school system's structure. The first phase of mayoral control was all about top-down centralization; in the second phase, the rallying cry is market incentives and autonomy for the principals.

Bloomberg presented his first school reorganization plan in a dramatic Martin Luther King Day speech in 2003, seven months after taking control of the schools. The city's 32 community school boards would be shut down, the mayor announced, and replaced with "one unified, focused, streamlined chain of command," running directly from city hall to the chancellor's office, then through ten powerful regional superintendents reporting directly to the chancellor, and finally down to each school's principal. From now on, the mayor said, "the chancellor

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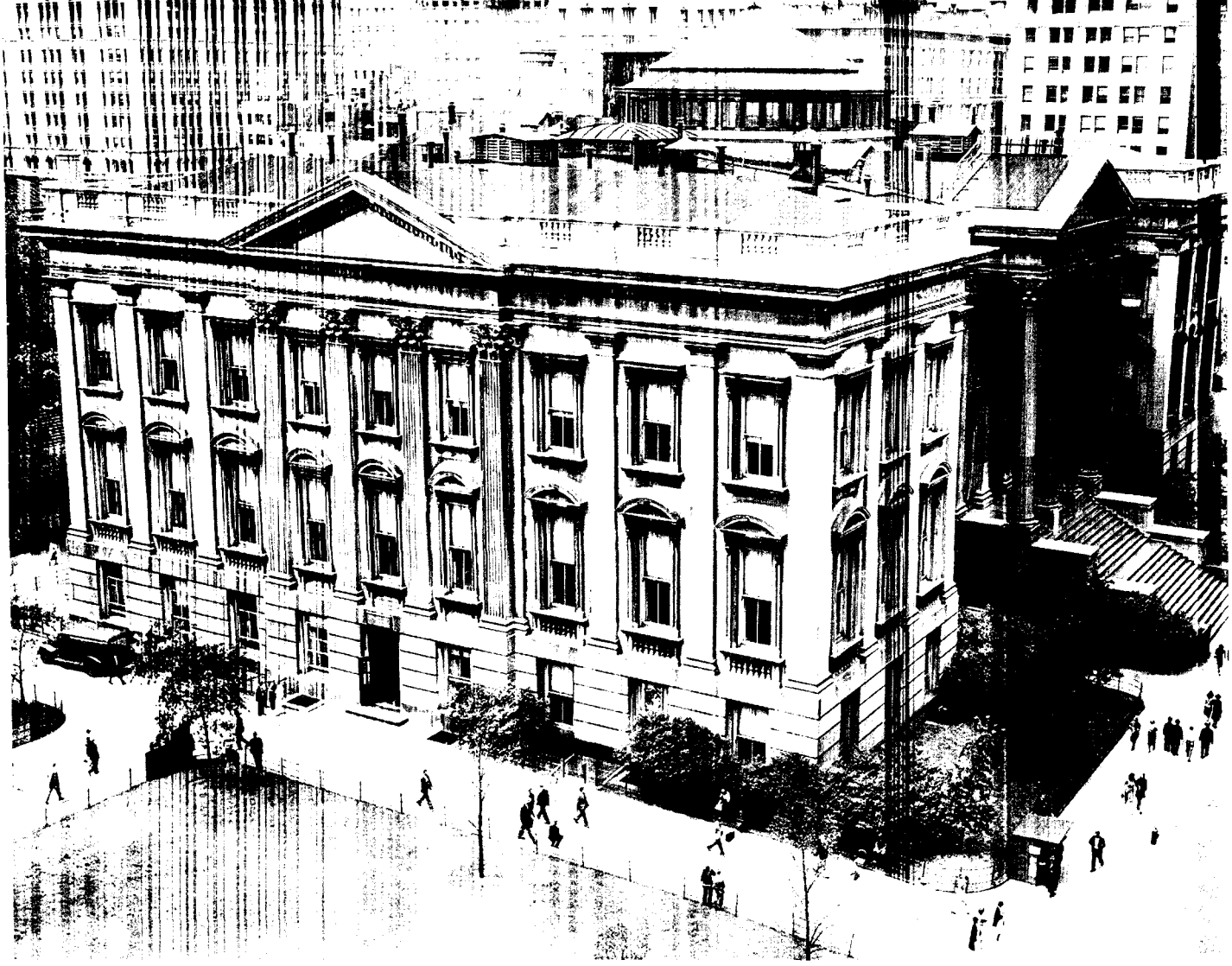

Department of Education planners at the Tweed Courthouse have lurched from one reform scheme to another.

will dictate the curriculum and pedagogical methods" in all but 200 schools.

"Dictate" is exactly what Klein did for the next three years. The city's principals were deemed so deficient in pedagogical understanding that Klein and his lieutenants would tell them how to arrange the chairs, the desks, the rugs, and even the bulletin boards in their classrooms. But Klein's directions on more important matters did not inspire confidence: for example, he imposed a reading program that progressive educators favor called Balanced Literacy (a euphemism for the "whole language" instructional approach), despite the lack of evidence that it works for disadvantaged children.

Sometime after the mayor's reelection, Bloomberg and Klein launched another radical restructuring of the system. The administration maintained its public posture that the first reorganization was working perfectly. But Klein's planners at the Tweed Courthouse were quietly preparing the ground for a 180-degree change. Klein hired three new deputy chancellors with reputations as strategic thinkers and a bent for systems management; all were Ivy League law school graduates who, like Klein, had clerked at the Supreme Court, though they had little or no education background. Klein also brought in a host of management consultants, including Sir Michael Barber, a former education advisor to British prime minister Tony Blair and now a partner at the consulting firm McKinsey and Company, where he specializes in "performance management systems." As one former DOE official put it, the new brain trust "stopped talking about education. It was all about systems and incentives."

Klein soon become convinced that the best way to drive improvement in test scores was to create financial and other incentives for each of the important actors in the system—principals, teachers, even students—to work harder and

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more effectively. In fact, with the encouragement of Alvarez and Marsal, a high-priced consulting firm hired by the DOE, Klein created a new office in the Department of Education: the "Market Maker." From operating like a regulated, command-and-control economy, the system would go almost overnight to something that, on paper at least, would work like Adam Smith's invisible hand. It was all theoretical, of course. There were no precedents to consult and no research to back it up, because no one had ever tried to simulate a market system within a big-city school district—certainly not so swiftly.

But Sir Barber was telling Klein that the only way to make a radical transition in a big system like New York's was to push through changes quickly before the special interests mobilized—somewhat like the "shock therapy" that some Western economists once advocated for former Soviet bloc countries transitioning from state socialism to free markets.

Bloomberg administered the first big shock in last January's State of the City speech. Market-based accountability, he explained, would rest on four pillars. The city's 1,450 principals would throw off the shackles of central bureaucracy and become independent CEOs, running their schools as small enterprises. Principals would be rewarded or fired based on a sophisticated new data system that tracked their students' progress on test scores as they advanced through the grades. Tenure rules would be reformed, making it possible to apply market discipline to the teaching labor force. And school-funding formulas would be equalized: each student in the school system would be funded with the same base dollar amount, with schools getting higher funding levels for immigrants still learning English and for special-education students.

Each of these reform proposals contains considerable potential for good. Giving principals more autonomy is certainly preferable to dictatorship. More data on student performance are always welcome and will, if trustworthy, lead to more accurate performance evaluations of principals. Reforming tenure is worth exploring, since the rules for weeding out bad teachers are broken. Finally, equalizing funding for students, an idea first proposed by the Fordham Foundation last year, is not only a matter of elementary fairness; it can also provide needed aid for poorly performing schools, and it ensures that competition among schools takes place on a level playing field.

Unfortunately, the latest reorganization plan is already falling apart. The administration has applied reasonable-sounding reforms with little appreciation for the culture of the schools. One glaring example is the equitable-funding plan. The administration decided to count teacher salaries against each school's new budget under the proposed funding formula. Since teacher salaries are based largely on seniority, this would penalize stable schools with long-serving staffs.

The Bloomberg administration must have known that the UFT would have to protect its senior teachers. Along with a coalition of activist groups that opposed the entire reorganization, the union began organizing a massive City Hall protest rally. The mayor initially hung tough: he called his own mini-rally, attended by 100 supporters, attacked the "special interests" blocking progress in the schools, and likened the UFT to the National Rifle Association.

But the next morning, the mayor was breakfasting with union president Randi Weingarten. After a weeklong negotiation, the administration took both the new funding proposal and the tenure initiative off the table for the next two years—by which time Bloomberg will be packing to leave City Hall. The mayor may have been right about the "special interests," but his retreat had plenty to do with politics and his own interests. A big fight with the teachers would have damaged his reputation as the "education mayor" and threatened his potential White House run.

One of the two remaining parts of the second reorganization, the principals' empowerment initiative, gives educators only an illusion of the free market that they would need to manage schools as businesses. This became clear on a

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recent spring afternoon at the Grand Hyatt New York. In an event organized by Klein's Market Maker office, all the city's principals were invited to the luxury hotel for a celebration of their impending liberation from central bureaucratic control. Ushered into the hotel's huge ballroom to the beat of a live jazz band, the principals were treated to a video starring New York City public school alums Henry Kissinger, Spike Lee, and Joan Rivers, plus a half-dozen of the most adorable, well-spoken children presently attending city schools. The alums and the kids recounted charming stories about their schools' dedicated principals, and Spike Lee narrated a separate segment explaining the principals' new roles in the reorganization. After the video, Klein told the principals that they were about to become results-oriented CEOs with the managerial and pedagogical skills to drive the next phase of Bloomberg's turnaround of the schools.

"No one had ever tried to simulate a market system within a big-city school district—certainly not so swiftly."

The soon-to-be-empowered principals then got to wander through the hotel's exhibition halls, transformed into a supermarket of education service providers. The educators got a taste of the services that they would soon be able to buy for their schools to replace those currently supplied by the central bureaucracy. In turn, the 14 providers competed against one another to sign up the principals, now in control of their own budgets, as customers.

To his credit, Klein approved the inclusion of several providers with substantive academic programs. One of these was the Success for All Foundation, which features the scientifically tested reading program that Klein unwisely dumped from dozens of schools in his first year in office. But it soon became clear that the program didn't have much of a chance to sell its goods in Klein's new supermarket. When I visited the hall in which SFA staffers were making their presentation, it was practically empty. Nervous principals, shell-shocked by this latest reorganization, decided to play it safe and go with one of the providers that knew its way around the DOE headquarters, rather than with an out-of-town organization like Success for All. Several sources also confirmed that providers had offered jobs to some of the supervisors departing the school system—on condition that they sign up as customers the principals whom they used to supervise.

What's left of the mayor's new reorganization plan is the sophisticated data management system, developed by Columbia Law School professor James Liebman. It promises to go further in charting how much students in the city's schools are learning than any tool available in any school system in the country. Kudos are certainly in order for Bloomberg, Klein, and Liebman. But after the past five years' experience with the education department's public-relations machine, there must be guarantees that all these data will be completely transparent, available to all, and free of manipulation.

When the state legislature begins debating the reauthorization of mayoral control next year, one question that it will surely have to consider is whether mayoral control can deliver true accountability. The only way to ensure this is to create an independent agency with the authority to mine all the education department's data about test scores and graduation rates, to do research about which programs are working, and then to make all that information available to the public on a regular, timely basis. No sane person would want to go back to anything like the discredited Board of Ed. But without a guarantee that an independent research agency will be created and properly funded, extending mayoral control would be an invitation for the next politically ambitious mayor to keep undermining the credibility of the public education system that is so essential to our democracy.

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The Abduction of Opera

Heather Mac Donald

Can the Met stand firm against the trashy productions of trendy nihilists?

Mozart's lighthearted opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* does not call for a prostitute's nipples to be sliced off and presented to the lead soprano. Nor does it include masturbation, urination as foreplay, or forced oral sex. Europe's new breed of opera directors, however, know better than Mozart what an opera should contain. So not only does the *Abduction* at Berlin's Komische Oper feature the aforementioned activities; it also replaces Mozart's graceful ending with a Quentin Tarantino–esque bloodbath and the promise of future perversion.

Welcome to Regietheater (German for "director's theater"), the style of opera direction now prevalent in Europe. Regietheater embodies the belief that a director's interpretation of an opera is as important as what the composer intended, if not more so. By an odd coincidence, many cutting-edge directors working in Europe today just happen to discover the identical lode of sex, violence, and opportunity for hackneyed political "critique" in operas ranging from the early Baroque era to that of late Romanticism.

Until now, New York's Metropolitan Opera has stood resolutely against Regietheater decadence. In fact, its greatest gift to the world at the present moment is to mount productions—whether sleekly abstract or richly realistic—that allow the beauty of some of the most powerful music ever written to shine forth.

The question now is whether that musical gift will continue.

The Met's new general manager, Peter Gelb, hit Lincoln Center last year like a comet, promising to attract new audiences by injecting more "theatrical excitement" into the house. Predicting what that would ultimately mean was difficult enough before another bombshell exploded this February: New York City Opera, the smaller company across the plaza from the Met, announced that it had hired Europe's most prominent exponent of Regietheater as its next general manager. The shock waves at Lincoln Center still reverberate.

This time of critical transition is an opportune moment both to celebrate the Met's role in preserving a central glory of Western culture, and to consider the great opera house's future. To see how much is at stake, one need only glance across the Atlantic and, increasingly, at other opera companies here in the United States.

The reign of Regietheater in Europe is one of the most depressing artistic developments of our time; it suggests a culture that cannot tolerate its own legacy of beauty and nobility. Singers, orchestra members, and conductors know how shameful the most self-indulgent opera productions are, and yet they are powerless to stop them. Buoyed with government subsidies, and maintained by an informal alliance of government-appointed arts bureaucrats and critics, the phenomenon thrives, even when audiences stay away in disgust.

The injury that Regietheater does to Mozart, Handel, and other benefactors of humanity is heartbreaking enough. But it also hurts the public, by denying new audiences the unimpeded experience of an art form of unparalleled sublimity. The seventeenth-century Florentines who created the first operas sought to recover the power of Greek tragedy, which united drama and song. Since then, opera has expressed a limitless range of human emotions, set to music of sometimes unbearable exquisiteness. Initially devoted to the exploits of kings and gods, opera by the end of the nineteenth century had conferred on the passions of

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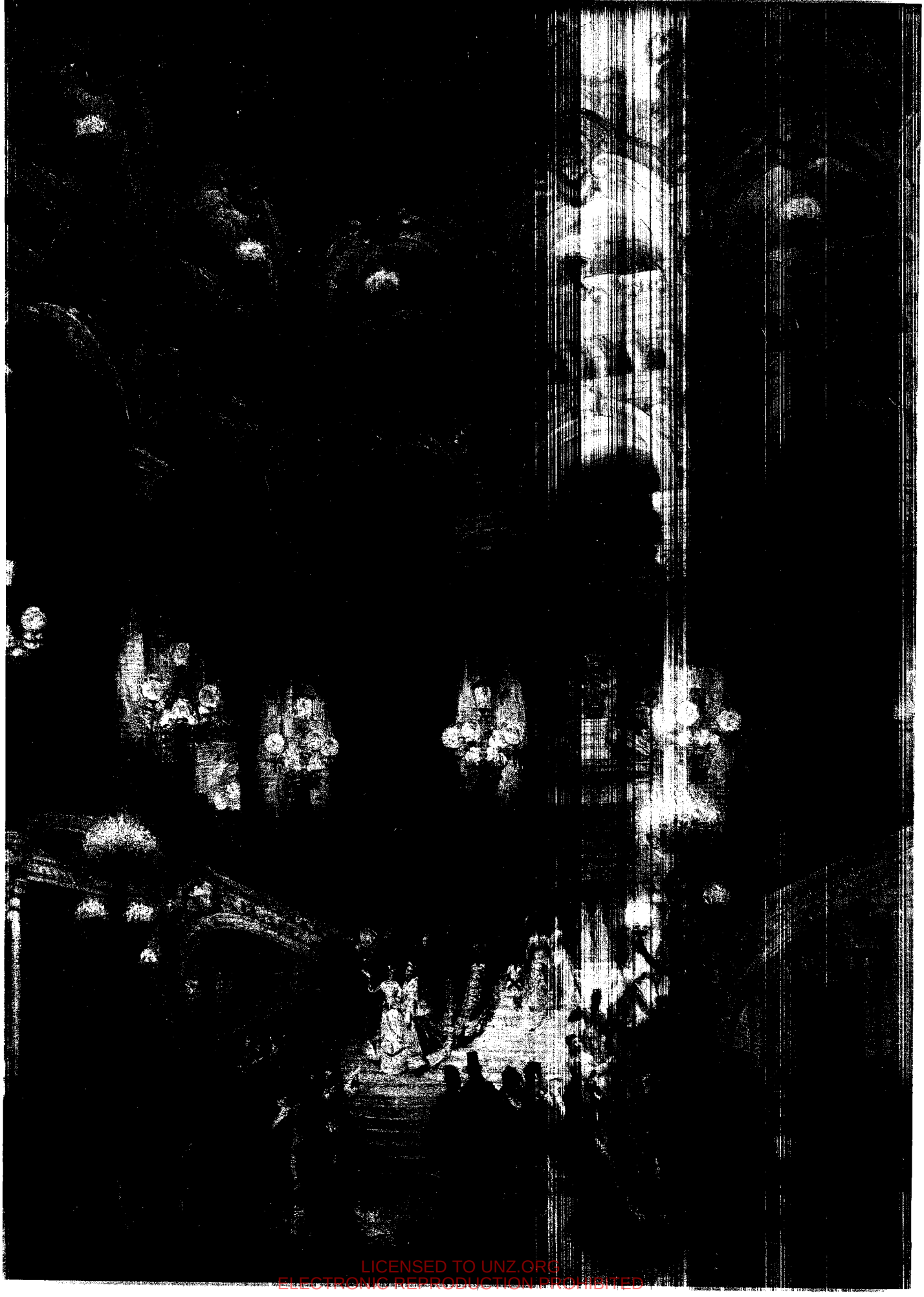

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workers and shopkeepers an equal grandeur, worthy of the majestic resources of the symphony orchestra.

The trajectory of the Komische Oper's *Abduction from the Seraglio*—from the object of an in-house revolt to a sold-out triumph—is a fitting introduction to the decadence of Europe's present musical culture. The episode presents a depressing variant on Mel Brooks's *The Producers*: whereas Max Bialystok knew that his *Springtime for Hitler* was garbage and expected failure, the director of this *Abduction*, Calixto Bieito, assumed that his travesty would be a success—and it was.

Bieito is the most offensive director working in Europe today. Accordingly, he is in high demand; he has mauled Verdi, Puccini, Mozart, and Richard Strauss in London, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Hanover, and numerous other venues. Like many Regietheater directors, the Catalan Bieito piously claims to take his cues from the music itself. "I think I am very loyal to Mozart," he notes. "There is nothing more to say."

Actually, there is a lot more to say. *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is a humorous tale of the capture of a group of Europeans by a Turkish pasha, who tries to win the love of one of them; Mozart lavishes joyful, driving rhythms—led by piccolo, triangle, and cymbals—on its Turkish themes, and adds a rich lode of elegant solos, particularly for tenor. Bieito transferred the *Abduction* to a contemporary Eastern European brothel and translated the dignified pasha of Mozart's sadly irrelevant tale into the brothel's sick pimp overseer. To give the production's explicit sadomasochistic sex an even greater frisson of realism, Bieito hired real prostitutes off the streets of Berlin to perform onstage. Needless to say, neither the streetwalkers nor the whippings, masturbation, and transvestite bondage are anywhere suggested in Mozart's opera. In one representative moment, the leading soprano, Constanze—who has already suffered digital violation during a poignant lament—is beaten and then held down and forced to watch as the pasha's servant, Osmin, first forces a prostitute to perform fellatio on him and then gags the prostitute and slashes her to death. Osmin hands the prostitute's trophy nipples to Constanze, who by then is retching.

The episode perfectly illustrates the opportunistic literalism typical of culturally ignorant—and musically deaf—contemporary directors. It takes place as Constanze is singing one of the most difficult arias in the soprano literature, "Martern aller Arten" ("Tortures of Every Kind"). "Martern" is an obstacle course of leaps and trills accompanied by melting winds and propulsive harmonies, all meant to convey Constanze's nobility in refusing the pasha's demands for her love. It belongs in the long literary tradition of tragic rhetoric; its mention of torture is not a stage direction. Mozart immediately follows the number with a buoyant aria by Constanze's maid and a return to the lightest farce—making clear that nothing untoward has happened to Constanze or to anyone else in the opera. But Bieito seizes on the torture reference, stripped of its musical and dramatic context, to justify his pornographic mayhem.

Like all Regietheater directors, Bieito has little tolerance for happy endings—or for any set of values at odds with his own clichéd worldview. In the conclusion to Mozart's opera, the four European captives sing a hymn of praise to the pasha for granting them liberty and for renouncing revenge for a cruelty done to the pasha by a captive's father long ago. Such celebrations of enlightened rule, even by a Muslim, were standard in Baroque and Classical operas; there is no reason to think that Mozart didn't fully embrace the sentiments behind the convention.

Bieito doesn't, however. In the finale of his *Abduction*, after a gruesome massacre of the writhing prostitutes, Constanze shoots first the pasha and then herself. So the concluding chorus of "long live the pasha" is mystifyingly directed at a dead man. No matter. Better to make nonsense of Mozart's libretto than to allow such outdated sentiments as forgiveness, gratitude, and nobility to show up on an opera stage.

The orgies and boorish behavior that Bieito demands of his characters do violence to

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the music above all, so it was fitting that the Komische Oper's orchestra members were the first to rebel. The musicians nearly mutinied during rehearsals for the 2004 premiere, according to the online magazine *Klassik in Berlin*, and backed down from a threatened walkout only after angry negotiations with Bieito and the musical director. Opera staff observing a late rehearsal stormed out of the house, and a palpable depression settled over the chorus. "Such a thing does not deserve to be seen on our stage . . . on any stage," one chorus member said. The opening-night audience shared the musicians' dismay. "Mozart didn't intend this!" shouted protesters. But audience sentiment has little purchase in Europe's subsidized opera houses. At the cast party after the premiere, Berlin's top corporate and political leaders rubbed shoulders with strippers and whores, resulting in one of the most scintillating events in years, reported *Klassik in Berlin*.

Then a DaimlerChrysler official said that he didn't think that the company should support such work with its grant money, guaranteeing the production's success by conferring on it the exalted status of victim of corporate censorship. (Private support for Berlin's three opera houses is still marginal compared with government funding, though.) Defending the importance of Bieito's production, Berlin's culture senator—a bureaucrat who dispenses government arts subsidies—argued that its "description of blood, sex, and violence is a true reflection of social phenomena." Perhaps the senator was unaware that there *are* no such "social phenomena" in Mozart's *Abduction*. Or perhaps it no longer matters.

DaimlerChrysler, facing a public-relations fiasco, recanted penitently. The production sold out for the remainder of its run and has been twice revived. Any first-time listener who came away with the slightest intimation of the charm of Mozart's Singspiel must have had an extraordinary ability to rise above squalor in pursuit of the sublime.

Other Regietheater directors may not yet have achieved the sheer volume of gratuitous perversion and bloodletting that Bieito managed to cram into his *Abduction*—but their aesthetic obeys the same impulse. Gérard Mortier, City Opera's incoming general manager and the current head of the Paris Opera, staged a *Fledermaus* at the Salzburg Festival that dragooned Johann Strauss's delightful confection into service as a cocaine-, violence-, and sex-drenched left-wing "critique" of contemporary Austrian politics. An American tenor working in Germany remembers another *Fledermaus* with a large pink vagina in the center of the stage into which the singers dived. The innocent sea captain's daughter, Senta, in the Vienna State Opera's *Flying Dutchman* has posters of Che and Martin Luther King in her bedroom instead of a picture of the mysterious Dutchman, and burns herself to death with gasoline rather than jumping into the sea to meet her phantom beloved. Don Giovanni is almost invariably an offensive slob who masturbates and stuffs himself with junk food and drugs, surrounded by equally repellent psychotics, perverts, and sluts. (Operagoers can thank American director Peter Sellars for this tired convention.) Handel's Romans and nobles come accessorized with machine guns, sunglasses, and video cameras, while jerking like rappers to delicate Baroque melodies.

The world at large got a glimpse of Regietheater last year, thanks to the furor over the Deutsche Oper Berlin's *Idomeneo*; unfortunately, the controversy focused on the wrong issue. The real outrage was not that the company considered canceling the show for fear of a Muslim backlash but that the potential provocation of that backlash—Mohammed's severed head perched jauntily on a straight-backed chair—had absolutely nothing to do with Mozart's opera. Director Hans Neuenfels had injected Mohammed's and other religious figures' heads into the classical Greek story simply to register his personal dislike of religion. Neuenfels's next project: a *Magic Flute* with a large penis for the flute.

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The list of tone-deaf self-indulgences could be extended indefinitely. Their trashy sex and disjunctive settings are just the symptom, however, of a deeper malady. The most insidious problem with Regietheater is the directors' hatred of Enlightenment values. Where a composer writes lightness and joy, they find a "subtext" of darkness. A recent modernized version of *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Salzburg Festival showed Figaro angrily slashing the page Cherubino's arm and smearing him with blood during the jaunty aria "Non più andrai." That aria, in which Figaro teases the young dandy about his upcoming banishment to the army, is gently mocking, not dark and violent. But in a transgressive director's hands, humor, reconciliation, happiness, and above all else, grandeur must be exposed as mere fronts for despair, resentment, and the basest instincts. No positive sentiment can appear without a heavy overlay of irony.

Just because our age regards grand ideals with cynicism, however, does not license us to write them out of the great works of the past. Doing so only impoverishes us. "There is considerable intellectual laziness in the idea that the past must be problematized and that older works must be 'rescued' from their ideological presuppositions," says *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross. "Looking at the extraordinary mess the world is in, you might suppose that it's our ideological presuppositions that are inherently flawed, and that we can actually draw useful moral lessons from the past."

Regietheater directors undoubtedly think of themselves as sophisticated when they unmask courtly decorum as just a cover for fornication. The demystifiers' awareness of desire is so crude that they cannot hear that the barely perceptible darkening of a voice or the constricted suffusion of breath into a note can be a thousand times more erotic than a frenzy of pelvic thrustings. And they rage against aesthetic conventions whose complexity challenges their simplistic understanding of human experience. Peter Sellars created one of Regietheater's most horrifying images in his production of *The Marriage of Figaro*, set in Trump Tower: Cherubino, clad in hockey uniform, humping a mattress like a crazed poodle during the breathless aria "Non so più cosa son." In the aria, Cherubino sings of his confusion in the presence of women and his compulsion to speak about love—"waking, dreaming, to water, to shadows, to the mountains." "I know, it's all just about sex!" giggles Sellars, like some 12-year-old with his first *Playboy*. Well, no, actually, it's not. This sexual dumb show is inimical to the delicacy and innocence of the aria, whose beauty consists in part of sublimating desire into the artifice of pastoral poetry. Sellars's staging belongs with a Snoop Dogg rap rant, not with Mozart and his librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte.

Europe is cursed with critics just as musically insensate and aesthetically illiterate as the directors whom they promote. Lydia Steier of *Klassik in Berlin* applauded the Bieito *Abduction* for "cut[ting] through any sentimental membrane protecting the opera from the stomach-churning brutality of such modern phenomena as human trafficking and snuff films." This statement may well be the stupidest ever offered in defense of Regietheater. There is no "sentimental membrane" protecting Mozart from snuff films; there is not even the remotest connection between the two. The *Guardian*'s opera reviewer, Charlotte Higgins, was mystified that Bieito's production of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the English National Opera garnered "furious headlines." By Higgins's own account, it contained the usual "transvestites, masturbation, simulated sex, nudity and, in the opening scene, a row of men sitting on toilets." So what's the big deal? asked Higgins. "The fact that you can get all that and more on TV every night seemed not to deter the carpers, presumably because opera is supposed to be respectable," she sneered. But serious operagoers aren't protesting transvestites or masturbation per se, only the minor detail that they have nothing to do with the sound world of Verdi.

Singers generally detest transgressive productions, but have little clout. No one wants to acquire a reputation for

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being obstructionist. Even the great American baritone Sherrill Milnes felt that he had to compromise on an outrageous demand during a German production of Verdi's *Otello*. During the third-act duet in which Otello accuses Desdemona of being a whore, a "well-known stage director," as Milnes describes him, wanted Milnes's Iago to crawl on his belly across the stage. And then, says Milnes, "he wanted me to jerk off and have an orgasm."

Milnes was astounded. "I won't do it, it's wrong on every front," he remembers responding. "At the very least, it's rude to interrupt the focal point of the scene between Desdemona and Otello. It's not about Iago's reaction." (In fact, Iago is not even supposed to be onstage.) "No way I'll put my hand on my crotch; it's embarrassing for Sherrill Milnes and it's embarrassing for Sherrill Milnes as Iago." But Milnes gave ground: "I came on the stage, but not as long as the director wanted, breathed a little hard and exited."

A few singers have walked out on productions, but more often they grit their teeth and just try to get through them. Diana Damrau, a rapidly rising German soprano, draws herself up with icy haughtiness when asked about her participation in the infamous Bavarian State Opera *Rigoletto*, set on the Planet of the Apes. "I fulfilled my contract," she says scornfully. "This was superficial rubbish. You try to prepare yourself for a production, you read secondary literature and mythology. Here, we had to watch *Star Wars* movies and different versions of *The Planet of the Apes*. . . . This was just . . . noise."

Well into the twentieth century, conductors controlled opera staging, and in theory they could still beat back Regietheater today. But they, no less than singers, worry about jeopardizing their careers. "You need courage to oppose it," says Pinchas Steinberg, former chief conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony and former principal guest conductor of the Vienna State Opera. "People start to say: 'You can't work with this guy, he creates problems.'" Conductor Yuri Temirkanov did quit a production of Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* at the Opéra de Lyon in 2003. "I wouldn't be able to live with my conscience if I conducted that [garbage]," he told the general director. Such showdowns are rare, however.

That leaves the audience as the final bulwark against the trashing of opera. But even when audiences stay away in droves—and "sometimes in those productions you could shoot ducks in the auditorium and not hit anyone," says Milnes—the managerial commitment to Regietheater usually remains firm.

None of the conventional explanations for the rise of Regietheater in opera is fully convincing. Certainly the prevalence of massive state subsidies allows European opera managers to shrug off paltry box-office numbers. And to justify those subsidies, opera houses currently feel compelled to prove that they are not "elitist" institutions, observes Alex Ross. "Alleged critiques of the bourgeois order, the conservative establishment, etc. fit the bill."

But while subsidies may be a necessary condition for Regietheater, they are not a sufficient one. European opera has been subsidized to varying degrees throughout its centuries-long history without generating the musical abuse that is now so common. And Regietheater productions are creeping into the U.S., where opera relies overwhelmingly on private support. The Spoleto Festival USA, for example, has presented the usual masturbating Don Giovanni; a recent Rossini *Cenerentola* (Cinderella) in Philadelphia featured a motorcycle and large TV screens projecting the characters' supposed thoughts; City Opera mounted a *Traviata* in the 1990s that ended in an AIDS ward. Manager Pamela Rosenberg tried to make the San Francisco Opera a premier venue for European-style directing in the early 2000s, but she is gone now, after losing thousands of subscribers. The market provided the necessary corrective in San Francisco, but other managers, seeking elite acclaim, will make similar attempts in the future.

Germany's postwar reaction to Nazism also undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of transgressive stagings there in the 1970s, yet more as a

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pretext than as an actual cause. The most radical reaction to Nazism in the opera world to date had nothing to do with today's trashing impulse. When the Bayreuth Festival, Richard Wagner's shrine, reopened in 1951, Wagner's grandson, Wieland Wagner, discarded Richard's own naturalistic sets and replaced them with light alone. Jettisoning Richard Wagner's picturesque realism, which had come to be associated with National Socialism, was revolutionary, but it did not arise from any assumption on Wieland's part that he was licensed to "deconstruct" his grandfather's works. Today's bad boys of German opera may puff themselves up with the belief that they are contributing to denazification, but nothing in that project compels their aesthetic choices. Nor does anti-Nazism explain the attraction of Regietheater outside Germany.

The current transgressive style of opera production is better understood as a manifestation of the triumph of adolescent culture, which began with the violent student movement of the 1960s. Even as West Germany forged ahead economically, its intellectuals, students, and artists became infatuated with the prosperity-killing Marxism practiced in stumbling East Germany. West German opera houses began inviting East Berlin directors to bring their heavy-handed critiques of capitalism, staged on the backs of Wagner and other composers, to Western venues. The situation was the same across Europe. "Student dissatisfaction with materialism . . . echoed in the theaters, notably in repertory and styles of production that were critical of bourgeois values and the status quo," writes Patrick Carnegy in *Wagner and the Art of the Theatre*. In Paris in the late 1960s, City Opera manager-in-waiting Gérard Mortier led a group of student provocateurs who loudly disrupted opera productions that they considered too traditional.

The defining characteristic of the sixties generation and its cultural progeny is solipsism. Convinced of their superior moral understanding, and commanding wealth never before available to average teenagers and young adults, the baby boomers decided that the world revolved around them. They forged an adolescent aesthetic—one that held that the wisdom of the past could not possibly live up to their own insights—and have never outgrown it. In an opera house, that outlook requires that works of the past be twisted to mirror our far more interesting selves back to ourselves. Michael Gielen, the most influential proponent of Regietheater and head of the Frankfurt Opera in the late seventies and eighties, declared that "what Handel wanted" in his operas was irrelevant; more important was "what interests *us* . . . what *we* want."

Nicholas Payne, former general director of the English National Opera and champion of Calixto Bieito, echoes this devaluing of the past. "Director's theater or whatever you want to call it is an attempt to grab the material and make it speak to the spirit of today's times, isn't it?" he says. "I'm not saying that the only way to do [Monteverdi's] *Poppea* is to make Nero the son of the chief guy in North Korea. Nevertheless, if you're bothering to reproduce *Poppea*, it has to have some way of speaking to people now." It's hard to know whom that statement insults more—contemporary audiences or Monteverdi. Payne assumes that Monteverdi's works are so musically and dramatically limited that they cannot speak to us today on their own terms, and that audiences so lack imagination that they cannot find meaning in something not literally about them.

The dirty little secret of Regietheater is this: its practitioners know that no one will bother to show up for their drearily conventional political cant unless they ride parasitically on the backs of geniuses. Bieito has said that his purpose in staging *The Abduction from the Seraglio* was to highlight abuses in the contemporary sex trade. Let's pretend for a moment that Bieito actually cares about the fate of "sex workers." His path is clear: keep his grubby mitts off Mozart and write his own damn opera. But without Mozart or Verdi, the Regietheater director is nothing; he cannot even hope for third-rate avant-garde status. In a world where displaying

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bodily fluids in jars, performing sex acts in public, or trampling religious symbols will land you a gig at the Venice Biennale and a government grant, the only source of outrage still available to the would-be scourge of propriety is to desecrate great works of art.

Occasionally, Regietheater proponents admit to their aspirations to shock. More often, however, they package themselves as the saviors of art. Gérard Mortier says that in updating operas, he seeks to "transform a work dated in a certain era so it communicates something fresh today." He has it exactly backward. There is nothing less "fresh" than the tired rock-video iconography, the consumer detritus of beer cans and burgers, or the anti-imperialist, anti-sexist messages that Regietheater directors graft on to operas to make them "relevant." What *is* actually "fresh" about a Mozart opera, besides its terrible beauty, is that it comes from a world that no longer exists. And it is, above all, the music that bodies forth that difference. The Baroque and Classical styles in particular convey an entire mode of being, one that values grace and artifice over supposed authenticity and untrammeled self-expression.

Regietheater directors are infallibly deaf to the dramatic imperatives in the music that they stage. Bieito says that he hears in *Don Giovanni*, that work of unbearable grandeur, the "nihilism of the modern world"—a confession that should have disqualified him even from buying an opera CD. Nicholas Payne, who brought Bieito's *Don Giovanni* to the English National Opera, says that he is particularly fond of the moment in the Bieito production when Don Giovanni sings his canzonetta to Donna Elvira's maid, "Deh, vieni alla finestra," into a phone, instead of serenading her underneath her window with his mandolin. "There's something a little bit twee about getting out that lute, isn't there?" Payne asks. Suggestion to directors: if the troubadour tradition embarrasses you, you should not be in the business of producing opera.

The real problem with Payne's admiration for Bieito's canzonetta setting, however, is that it completely misjudges the music. Bieito makes the scene yet another depressing episode in the "nihilism of the modern world": Don Giovanni is sitting alone in an empty bar strewn with the refuse of heavy partying. After singing the serenade, weighed down with despair, he drops the phone—there is no indication that anyone is on the other end—and lays his head on the table in front of him. This tableau has nothing to do with the music or text. The sinuous "Deh, vieni alla finestra," far from being a moment of morbid paralysis, is the very emblem of the Don's irrepressible will. Though he has recently been caught out and denounced as a hell-bound libertine by his fellow nobles, he is happily back at his conquests, pouring seductive power into the crescendos of the canzonetta. Bieito's listless Giovanni could not possibly sing the music that Mozart has given him.

Jonathan Miller seethes with contempt for American audiences in general and the Metropolitan Opera in particular, which he accuses of mounting "kitschy" and "vulgar" productions. Yet at New York City Opera this season, he set Donizetti's pastoral comedy *L'Elisir d'Amore* in a 1950s American diner, complete with gum-chewing Elvis fans and Jimmy Dean iconography—as hackneyed a set of visuals as any in the Regietheater director's puny bag of tricks. Asked if Donizetti's poignant melodies really match the sock-hop antics on stage, Miller responds defensively: "The music works perfectly well with my setting; it's a witty transformation, that's all. It's as good as those staid pieces of rusticity which satisfy Met audiences because they want sedentary tourism." But doesn't music provide a check on how a work can be staged? "Music doesn't have any checks in it," he insists. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Moreover, when directors yank operas out of their historical contexts, they close a precious window into the past. Most operas' assumptions about nobility, virtue, and the duties of rulers and subjects, as well as of parents and children, could not be more alien to our modern experience. If we refuse to take such values seriously, not only do we render the plots incomprehensible;

EDGAR DEGAS, "L'ORCHESTRE DE L'OPÉRA"/THE ART ARCHIVE/MUSÉE D'ORSAY PARIS/DAGLI ORTI

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we also cut ourselves off from a greater understanding of what human life has been and, by contrast, is now. Update *Don Giovanni* to a contemporary setting where a mandate of premarital chastity is unthinkable, for example, and make the peasant girl Zerlina and the noblewomen Donna Anna and Donna Elvira all aggressively promiscuous—as is the case in virtually every modernized version since Peter Sellars's Spanish Harlem travesty—and Zerlina's cries of desperation when Don Giovanni hustles her off for a conquest become absurd, as does the nobles' response of "Soccorriamo l'innocente" ("Let us rescue the innocent girl!"). And the avenging triumvirate's subsequent warnings to Don Giovanni that retribution awaits him are meaningless in the amoral universe in which Regietheater directors inevitably set the opera.

Regietheater promoters imply that following a composer's intentions in staging a work is easy; genius lies in modernizing it. Mortier has even coyly suggested that his updating project gives him an affinity with Mozart. "You couldn't name one great composer—not that I want to compare myself to them—who did not have to fight," he says. "Think of Mozart selling his silverware to go to Frankfurt when the emperor could have given him a commission for his coronation." In fact, finding a visual language to convey the meaning of the music and the world it represents is where directing makes its claim to greatness. Stephen Wadsworth, for example, is one of the most historically sensitive directors working today; his understated productions of Handel's *Rodelinda* and *Xerxes* and of Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* at the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera are among those houses' treasures. The slightest gesture of a hand in a Wadsworth staging can convey the refinement and melancholy of the Baroque. Such details are part of what he calls the "vernacular" of the past.

Wadsworth unapologetically embraces one of the most toxic words in the operatic lexicon today: "curating." The last thing a solipsistic director wants to be accused of is lovingly preserving and transmitting the works of the past. Wadsworth, however, accepts the charge. Those given responsibility for an opera production are akin to those given responsibility for great paintings, he believes. "It is not our job to repaint them. We should only be concerned with: Where to hang it? How to light it? In what context? How do we present it to the public in a way that the public can appreciate what it is, perhaps even contextualize it in terms of that painter's body of work or some other trend or school or idea? The list of curatorial concerns and responsibilities is long. And I think that a lot of productions that we see simply fail to meet them."

In a few decades, Regietheater opera has destroyed what took centuries to develop. Long before Wagner called for the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (the total work of art), opera composers sought to enforce in the productions of their works a unity of music and dramatic action. Arrayed against this synthesis were singers, who treated opera as simply a platform for virtuoso recitals, and stage designers, who tried to cram as many awe-inspiring but irrelevant special effects onto the stage as their arsenal of fireworks and machinery would allow.

By the twentieth century, however, a revolution in attitudes toward the music of the past was under way—fueled, no doubt, by the recognition that no more pieces like those wonders were coming along. Gone was the carefree mutilation of scores by publishers, conductors, and performers that had been standard throughout Western musical history. In its place, an unprecedented reverence for the composer's work rose up. Singers reined in self-indulgences, and directors worked to unleash the music's dramatic potential. A profile of the German director Carl Ebert in a 1950 issue of *Opera* magazine underscored the new standard: "For Ebert, the music dictates how the actor should move, should look, how the scenery should be planned in shape as well as in color. Ebert achieves with his singers something like visible music for the listener."

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Regietheater has reversed that revolution, producing a disjuncture between the music and the visual and dramatic aspects of a production that is unprecedented in operatic history. Even as every other aspect of the music business continues on the path of greater professionalization and devotion to authenticity, opera directors have received the license to ignore the basic mandates of a score and libretto. This bifurcation results in such weird pairings as a period-instrument ensemble in the orchestra pit, sawing away at Baroque instruments in the hope of sounding just like Prince Esterhazy's court orchestra, while onstage, singers in baggy sweat pants, torn T-shirts, and baseball caps slouch through twenty-first-century cultural blight.

Standing against such disintegration is the Metropolitan Opera, regarded by the transcontinental opera establishment either with condescension or admiration as the last bastion of faithful production. The Met has always presented great singers and, more sporadically, renowned maestri, but for much of its existence the caliber of its stagings lagged behind that of its musical talent. This deficiency was due in large part to the woefully ill-designed backstage area of the opulent old opera house on West 39th Street, which housed the Met from its birth in 1883 until its move to Lincoln Center in 1966. When a taxi driver told Sir Thomas Beecham during World War II that he couldn't take him to the Met because gas restrictions banned rides to places of entertainment, the conductor replied: "The Metropolitan Opera is not a place of entertainment, but a place of penance." Stage discipline was often weak; some of the Met's most famous singers simply refused to rehearse.

But despite the limitations of the old house, the Met's greatest leaders progressively made the "sights . . . more harmonious with the sounds," as Rudolf Bing, the aristocratic general manager from 1950 to 1972, promised upon taking over. Indeed, Peter Gelb often sounds as though he is channeling Sir Rudolf, who brought the best stage and film directors of his time to work at the Met. Bing's theatrical ambitions were aided by a growing circle of donors, who paid for new productions, sometimes singlehandedly, when the board was unwilling to front the money. Charismatic philanthropists like Mrs. August Belmont created novel mechanisms for harvesting private support, including the first women's opera auxiliary guild. Even during the troubled 1960s and 1970s, when the Met struggled with union protests and severe budget problems, it forged ahead artistically, aided by the superb technical capacities of the new Lincoln Center facility.

The Met's role as the guardian of opera integrity emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. As the abuse of composers' intentions became more flagrant in Germany and then the rest of Europe, general manager Joseph Volpe deliberately separated the Met from the trend. "There was a conscious effort to avoid" Regietheater, says Joe Clark, the Met's peerless technical manager. "The idea was to get the best possible director with the best musical sense. We weren't always looking for traditional and realistic settings, but rather a realization that was musical and would show something appropriate to the opera." Robert Wilson's minimalist *Lohengrin* met that criterion as much as Zeffirelli's opulent *Turandot*. Conductor James Levine, the most important music director in the Met's history, is equally committed to fidelity to the music. "It is inspiring to work with a man who wants to put [an opera] on stage as the composer meant it," Levine said recently, praising director Jack O'Brien's staging of Puccini's *Il Trittico*.

Regietheater advocates caricature the Met as addicted to lavish, overblown scenery, associated—again, in caricature—with such masters of realism as Franco Zeffirelli and Otto Schenk. In fact, no competing house can boast such a variety of production styles, says critic Charles Michener. But what really makes the Met stand out today is language like the following, from theater director

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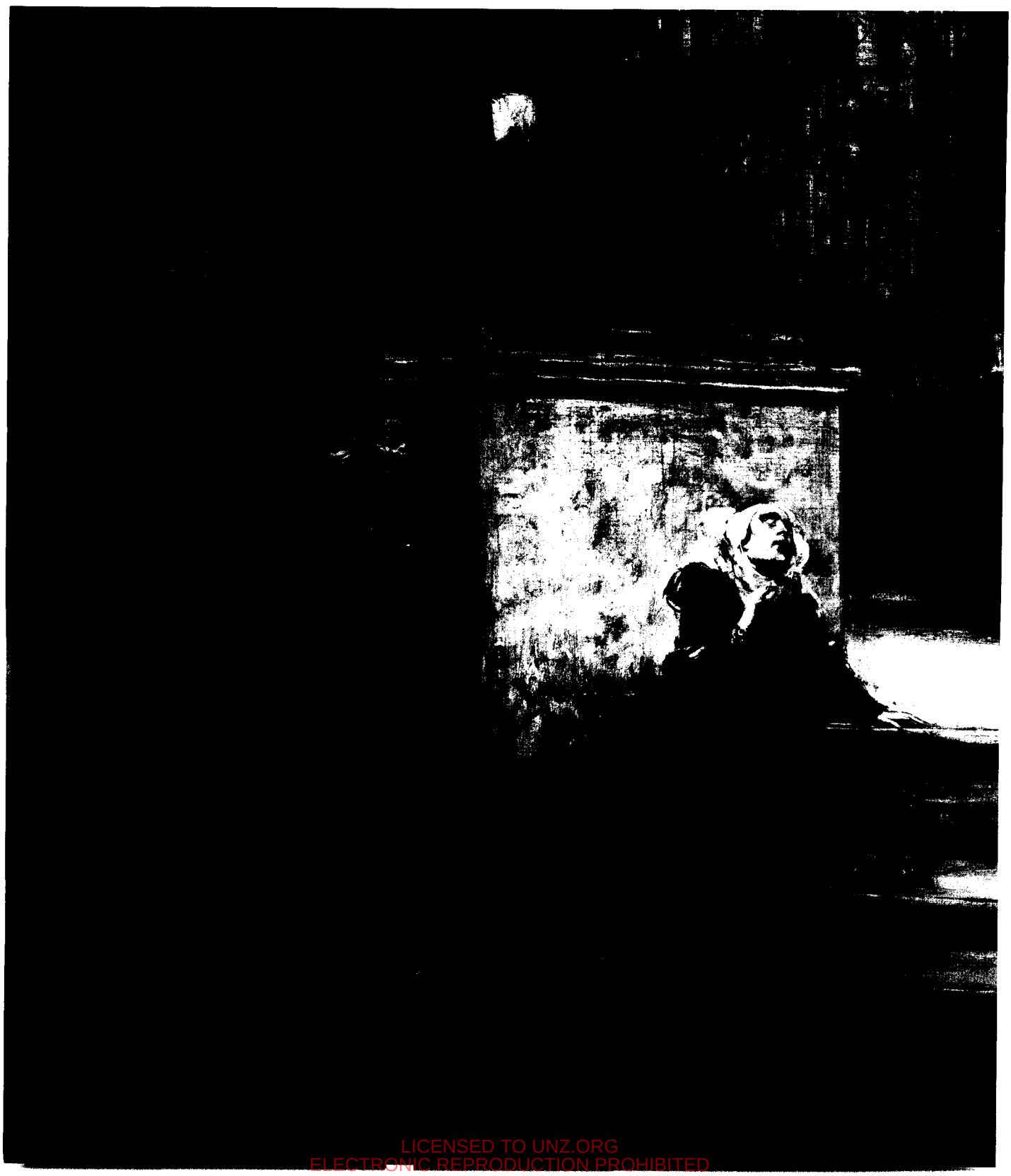

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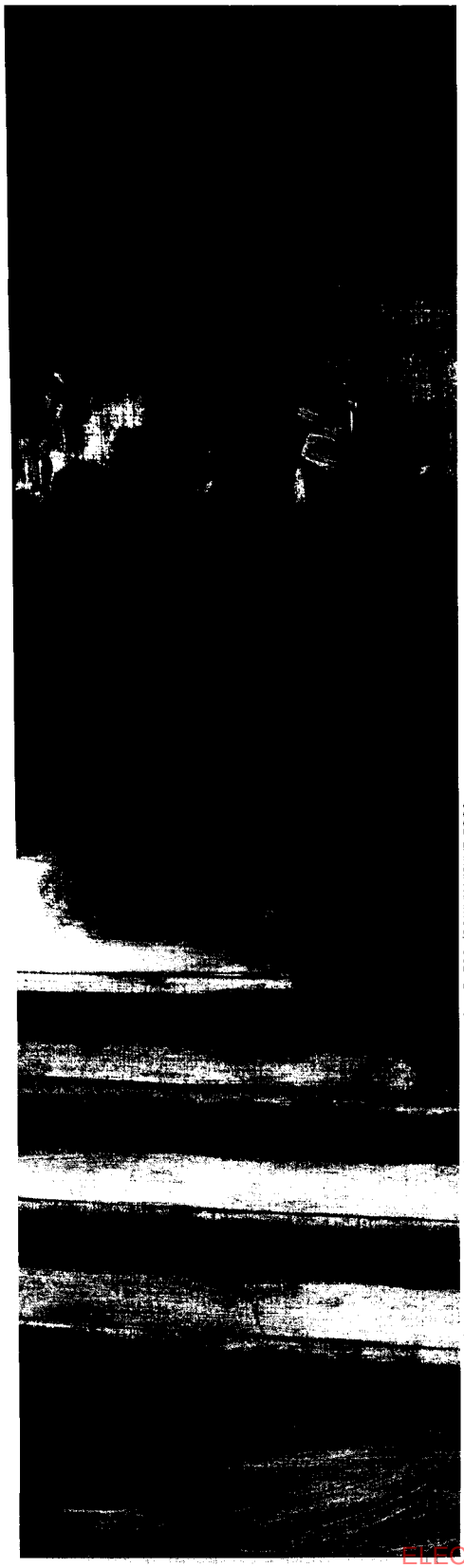

JOSE GARCIA RAMOS, "SCENE FROM THE OPERA 'FAUST'" ©ARCHIVO ICONOGRAFICO, S.A./CORBIS

Bart Sher, who mounted an energetic *Barber of Seville* this season. The Met is unique "among our many great institutions of public art and life," Sher says, in its "capacity for creating beauty beyond the heart to hold. You sit there and go: 'Western culture's an incredible thing.' " It is unimaginable that the directors who create the most buzz in Europe today would use such language. Asked about a director's responsibility to the beauty of a piece, Jonathan Miller responds: "To hell with beauty, it's a kitsch notion; I don't feel this business of being overwhelmed by it." And Miller, unlike the most violative directors working today, actually has created productions of great delicacy, such as his 1990 *Marriage of Figaro* at Vienna's Theater an der Wien.

Equally unthinkable from a Regietheater wunderkind is the unabashed enthusiasm of Broadway director O'Brien for the composer's intentions. "The author and composer are my household gods," says O'Brien, whose comic ensemble work in *Il Trittico* was infused with energy so taut as to make breathing difficult. "I don't think that my opinion is more important than theirs; I don't want to take my Magic Marker and scrawl over their works. Puccini's knowledge, control, and insight into dramatic literature is staggering; there's not a bar of music that is not dramatizable if you are sensitive to what the composer is asking you to do. I am never interested in a 'point of view,' only in making love to these pieces."

Peter Gelb could do worse than make these sentiments a litmus test for every director he brings into the house: Can the prospect unashamedly use the words "beauty" and "love" to describe music? It is a positive sign that Bart Sher is one of Gelb's additions to the Met's directing roster (O'Brien, also new to the house this year, was hired by Volpe).

Gelb has said that the Met has become "artistically somewhat isolated from the rest of the world" and reliant on "somewhat conservative patterns of thinking," and he has pledged to keep it "more broadly connected to contemporary society" through "exciting theatrical visions." One hopes that he is speaking as the master promoter that he is, creating a sense of newness to attract new audiences—and not in anticipation of a move toward the less conservative "patterns of thinking" and "theatrical visions" prevalent in Europe.

Still, a dedicated opera fan can be forgiven for being a little worried about what exactly Gelb means, since Regietheater is nipping everywhere at the Met's heels. Joseph Volpe says that as general manager, he constantly had to fend off demands for more "progressive" productions. "I was always criticized for not bringing in Peter Sellars," he says, "but I was brought up with Zeffirelli

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and other great directors, for whom the intentions of the composer were of the utmost importance." Sellars is in fact closing in, having turned Mozart's *Zaïde* into a pretentious critique of sweatshops for Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival last year, and having staged his video extravaganza, *The Tristan Project*, in Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall this year. And with Mortier bringing his relentless updating agenda to the New York City Opera in 2009, Gelb will face the most glamorous exponent of Regietheater right next door.

Ideally, Gelb will choose a strategy of product differentiation, branding the Met as the place where you can still see opera as its composers intended it. But if the press falls for Mortier—and some of New York's critics already disparage any production that they find too traditional—Gelb may face pressure to go Euro.

If Gelb's offerings to date exemplify his ideal of cutting-edge theatrics, the house will be well served. Anthony Minghella's *Madam Butterfly* was a lacquered blaze of jewel-colored light; its stylized, Asian-influenced use of puppetry and props was beautiful *and* consistent with Puccini's vision. Bart Sher's *Barber of Seville* was even more reassuring. Despite Gelb's efforts to package the production as a startling new twist on the story, primarily through an alleged emphasis on Figaro's virility, neither that aspect of Figaro's character nor the production itself represented a break from valid performance traditions. Sher simply directed an elegant, fast-paced *Barber* that pulsed with Rossini's comic genius (despite two lapses from good taste: the gratuitous lesbian lovemaking in Figaro's mobile barbershop and a wholly unmotivated visual pun on the name of a rock band that concluded the first act). The final production with a Gelb-chosen director this season—Richard Strauss's *Die Ägyptische Helena*, mounted by David Fielding—took the greatest liberties with the setting, but Fielding's storybook, surrealistic design matched the weirdly magical Hofmannsthal libretto without interpolating any self-indulgent political gloss.

The future, however, is more clouded, since some of Gelb's hires for upcoming seasons have revisionist productions on their resumés. Luc Bondy, engaged for *The Tales of Hoffmann* in 2009, staged a bloody *Idomeneo* at La Scala this year that simply shaved off Mozart's score when it conflicted with Bondy's dark rewriting of the story; his *Don Giovanni* at the Vienna State Opera in 1990 was a bizarre farrago of historical and futuristic settings and costumes. Patrice Chéreau, scheduled to mount Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* at the Met in 2009, directed a Ring cycle at Bayreuth in 1976 that became a landmark in Regietheater—and led to the formation of the Wagner Protection Society, so scandalized were patrons by Chéreau's injection of anticapitalist, environmental politics into the story. His Janáček, however, reportedly avoids heavy revisionism. Matthew Bourne will be staging *Carmen* at the Met; he has already shown a predilection for homoerotic themes in that opera, as well as in two ballet productions, *The Nutcracker* and an all-male *Swan Lake*. Richard Jones is one of Britain's bad boys of opera—but since his *Hansel and Gretel* at the Met next year is part of Gelb's new holiday family programming, he will probably tone down his usual intrusions.

Having done transgressive work in the past need not disqualify directors from working at the Met, as long as Gelb makes clear at the outset that he is not interested in their opinions on contemporary class or sexual relations. Directors should be able to work with that stipulation. When Giancarlo del Monaco, who set Verdi's Old Testament story *Nabucco* in Saddam Hussein's Iraq for a German production, arrived at the Met in the early 1990s, he said: "I have a Eurotrash face for Europe and a classy face for the Americans."

Gelb has made one unequivocal aesthetic stumble, however. In a bid to link the Met with the trendy downtown art scene, he commissioned an opera-inspired work from Richard Prince, among other art frauds, to display in a small new "art gallery" in the Met's lobby. Prince's contribution, "Madame Butterfly Is a Lesbian," is a wall-size array of hundreds of cheap wallet-size porn shots of naked women

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engaged in lesbian sex. Scrawled over the photos is Prince's idea of clever commentary: "I went to the opera. It was Madame Butterfly. I fell asleep. When I woke up the music was by Klaus Nomi and Cio-Cio-San had turned into a lesbian and refused to commit suicide. It was a German ending." Apparently, neither Gelb nor anyone else in the Met's press or fund-raising office was willing to say that such a work was inappropriate for a family institution seeking to spread the culture of opera, much less that it stank as art. Met patrons had better hope that the Prince display is just an aberration, of no deep meaning for the future.

The Met's board and audience may restrain any inclination that Gelb might have to dabble in Regietheater, but the final check should be Gelb's sense of the Met's history. Generations of hard work and artistic passion have gone into the house's current level of professional excellence. Gelb has sound business reasons for trumpeting a new beginning and an infusion of cutting-edge theatrical values. But it is important to remember how extraordinary the current state of the institution is. Though a certain type of opera lover perpetually mourns a lost golden age, arguably the golden age is now.

Gelb will earn a place in opera history if he maintains the Met's artistic character while continuing the inspired promotional blitz that he has already begun. Nothing he touches in the area of marketing escapes a massive infusion of glamour; the brochure for the 2007–08 season is as luxurious as a Bergdorf Goodman Christmas catalog. "He's a genius at selling," says Herman Krawitz, who ran the Met's complex backstage operations for years. "Gelb was a better press agent at age 18," when he worked as an usher at the Met, "than anyone there." His ideas for expanding the venues for opera—into movie theaters, schools, public spaces—are groundbreaking. "When he broadcast *Madam Butterfly* in Times Square, people here were amazed at the concept of this," says Vienna-based critic Larry Lash. Gelb's efforts are having a spillover effect: not only are other houses imitating his ideas—the Vienna State Opera will beam every performance into the plaza outside its house next season—but interest in local opera companies is rising in cities whose movie theaters have shown the Met's productions.

As its season wound down this year, the Met had sold out every remaining seat—this, without having made a single step in the direction of trendy transgressive productions. Contrary to the usual hand-wringing about an aging audience, young and middle-aged adults already appear to make up a surprisingly high percentage of patrons. They are coming to see not a twisted rewriting of the great works, but the thing itself, drawn to what opera promises: sublime musical beauty and human drama. For all the deservedly hyped new productions this year, the greatest experience to be had at the Met came in a production of Verdi's *Don Carlo* first mounted in 1979. German bass René Pape turned the extraordinary opening scenes of Act 4, in which the authoritarian King Philip II of Spain confronts first his own emotional isolation and then the ruthless Grand Inquisitor, into an unbearable portrait of anguish. There were no cutting-edge theatrical techniques in those two scenes, just singing and acting that left one's hair standing on end and one's head pulsing with Verdi's obsessive contrapuntal harmonies and dark grinding dissonances.

By all means, Gelb should commission as many new productions as his budget will allow, and then sell the pants off them, with all the creativity that he has already demonstrated. And certainly contemporary political commentary has a place at the Met—so long as it is integral to a new work, rather than strapped like a suicide bomb onto the back of an old one. But Gelb should remember that he is the guardian of a tradition that generations have built. That tradition approaches the magnificent works of the past with love and humility, recognizing our debt to them. The Met will remain a vital New York and world institution for another century if it allows those works to speak for themselves. ✻

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Oh, to

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Delusions of Honesty

Theodore Dalrymple

Tony Blair's domestic legacy: corruption and the erosion of liberty

When Tony Blair announced his resignation after ten years as prime minister of the United Kingdom, his voice choked with emotion and he nearly shed a tear. He asked his audience to believe that he had always done what he thought was right. He would have been nearer the mark had he said that he always thought that what was right was whatever he had done. Throughout his years in office, he kept inviolable his belief in the existence of a purely beneficent essence of himself, a belief so strong that no quantity of untruthfulness, shady dealings, unscrupulousness, or constitutional impropriety could undermine or destroy it. Having come into the world marked by Original Virtue, Blair was also a natural-born preacher.

In a confessional mood, Blair admitted that he had sometimes fallen short of what was expected of him. He did not give specifics, but we were expected to admire his candor and humility in making such an admission. It is no coincidence, however, that Blair reached maturity at the time of the publication of the famous book *Psychobabble*, which dissects the modern tendency to indulge in self-obsession without self-examination. Here was a *mea culpa* without the *culpa*. Bless me, people (Blair appeared to be saying), for I have sinned: but please don't ask me to say how.

There undoubtedly were things to be grateful for during the Blair years. His support for American policy in Iraq won him much sympathy in the U.S., of course. He was often eloquent in defense of liberty. And under Blair's leadership, Britain enjoyed ten years of uninterrupted economic growth, leaving large parts of the country prosperous as never before. London became one of the world's richest cities, vying with New York to be the global economy's financial center. Blair did inherit a strapping economy from his predecessor, and he left its management more or less to the man who succeeds him, Gordon Brown. Still, unlike previous Labour prime ministers, he did not preside over an economic crisis: in itself, something to be proud of.

But how history will judge him overall, and whether it will absolve him (to adapt slightly a phrase coined by a famous, though now ailing, Antillean dictator), is another matter. Strictly speaking, history doesn't absolve, or for that matter vindicate, anybody; only people absolve or vindicate, and except in the most obvious cases of villainy or sainthood, they come to different conclusions, using basically the same evidence. There can thus be no definitive judgment of Blair, especially one contemporaneous with his departure. Still, I will try.

Blair's resignation announcement was typical of the man and, one must admit, of the new culture from which he emerged: lachrymose and self-serving. It revealed an unfailing eye and ear for the ersatz and the kitsch, which allowed him so long to play upon the sensibilities of a large section of the population as upon a pipe.

He knew exactly what to say of Princess Diana when she died in a car accident, for example: that she was "the people's princess." He sensed acutely that the times were not so much democratic as demotic: that economic egalitarianism having suffered a decisive defeat both in theory and practice, the only mass appeal left to a politician calling himself radical was to cultural egalitarianism. He could gauge the feelings of the people because, in large part, he shared them. A devotee himself of the cult of celebrity, in which the marriage of glamour and

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DAVID MOIR/REUTERS/CORBIS

banality both reassures democratic sentiment and stimulates fantasies of luxury, he sought the company of minor showbusiness personalities and stayed in their homes during his holidays. The practical demonstration that he worshiped at the same shrines as the people did, that his tastes were the same as theirs, more than compensated for the faint odor of impropriety that this gave off. And differences of taste, after all, unite or divide men more profoundly than anything else.

No prime minister had ever been at once so ubiquitous and so inaccessible. Instinctively understanding the dynamics of the cult of celebrity, Blair was both familiar (he insisted on being known by a diminutive) and distant (he acted more as head of state than as head of government, and spent three times more on his own office than did his predecessor). Having invited 60 ordinary citizens into Downing Street so that they could give him their views, and so that he could say that he listened to the people, he proceeded to address them via a huge plasma screen, though he was in the building. So near, and yet so far: this was a grand vizier's durbar for the age of virtual reality. With Blair, communication, like time's arrow, flew in one direction only.

Tony Blair was the perfect politician for an age of short attention spans. What he said on one day had no necessary connection with what he said on the following day: and if someone pointed out the contradiction, he would use his favorite phrase, "It's time to move on," as if detecting contradictions in what he said were some kind of curious psychological symptom in the person detecting them.

Many have surmised that there was an essential flaw in Blair's makeup that turned him gradually from the most popular to the most unpopular prime minister of recent history. The problem is to name that essential flaw. As a psychiatrist, I found this problem peculiarly irritating (bearing in mind that it is always highly speculative to make a diagnosis at a distance). But finally, a possible solution arrived in a flash of illumination. Blair suffered from a condition previously unknown to me: delusions of honesty.

Blair came to power promising that his government would be "purer than pure," an

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expression both self-righteous and somewhat foolish, given the fallen nature of man. The Tories preceding him in government had become notorious for acts of corruption that now appear trifling. Indeed, one objection to those acts—for example, asking questions in the House of Commons in return for payment, handed under the table in used banknotes wrapped in brown paper envelopes—was the derisory sums involved. What kind of person would risk ruin for amounts of money that honest people could make in a week or two?

Soon after Blair took office, however, a billionaire named Bernie Ecclestone offered the Labour Party a $2 million donation if the government exempted Formula 1 motor racing, which he controlled, from the ban on cigarette ads at sporting events. The government granted the exemption. After public exposure, Blair declared himself to be such a "straight kind of guy" that it was inconceivable that he had involved himself in such an unsavory arrangement—though clearly he had. It was his capacity to believe his own untruths that proved so persuasive to others; it was among his greatest political assets.

Such scandals—involving favors granted to rich men, followed, after exposure, by protestations of injured innocence—punctuated Blair's tenure with monotonous regularity. One of the more notorious was the letter that Blair sent to the Romanian prime minister, Adrian Nastase, encouraging him to sell the state-owned steel producer Sidex to billionaire industrialist Lakshmi Mittal; it would help Romania's application to join the European Union, Blair argued, if a British company bought the steel producer. But Mittal's company was not British; of its 125,000 employees, only 100 worked in Britain; indeed, Mittal himself was not British. He had, however, donated $250,000 to Labour shortly beforehand.

Far from being purer than pure, Blair was laxly forgiving of impropriety in others, provided that they were loyal or politically useful to him. The case of Peter Mandelson is particularly instructive. When first a minister, Mandelson borrowed a large sum of money from another minister, Geoffrey Robinson, a multimillionaire, in order to buy a house. Not only did Mandelson fail to tell the bank that lent him the rest of the money for the purchase that the money he had in hand was not his own (in less well-connected mortals, that would be considered fraud); the government department that Mandelson headed at the time was investigating Robinson's own business affairs for suspected improprieties.

Public exposure forced Blair to accept Mandelson's resignation. But the prime minister soon reappointed Mandelson to the cabinet. Blair accepted Mandelson's resignation a second time, however, when it emerged that he had pushed through the passport application of one of the Hinduja brothers, Indian businessmen accused of corruption in India, after a $2 million donation to Labour. Blair then rewarded Mandelson with the lucrative and powerful post of European Commissioner. What is one to conclude from this?

Having come into power deeply critical of the previous government's use of private consultants, Blair promptly increased spending on them at least tenfold, ensuring the loyalty of senior civil servants (traditionally a professional cadre, not political appointees) by allowing them to cross back and forth between public and private employment, enriching themselves enormously at public expense in the process. Thus Blair played Mephistopheles to the civil service's Faust, introducing levels of corruption and patronage not seen in Britain since the eighteenth century. Huge sums of money have disappeared, as if into a black hole, into such organizations as the National Health Service, where bureaucracies have hugely expanded and entwined their interests so closely with those of private suppliers and consultancies that it is difficult to distinguish public from private any longer. Spending on the NHS has increased by two and a half times in the space of ten years; yet it is hard to see any corresponding improvement in the service, other than in the standard of living of those who work in it.

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Blair even became the first serving prime minister in history to find himself questioned by the police in Downing Street, under caution of self-incrimination, in the course of a criminal investigation—in this case, into the selling of seats in the House of Lords. Small wonder that for much of the population, truth and Blair now appear to inhabit parallel universes. Reflecting the country's mood is the famous remark that Gordon Brown made to Blair: "There is nothing that you could say to me now that I could ever believe."

Blair proved unusually expert in the postmodernist art of spin. A political advisor to the government perfectly captured this approach on September 11, 2001, when she said that it was "a good day to bury bad news." In other words, you can get away with anything if the timing is right.

At the outset of his tenure, Blair said that his government would be tough on crime and on the causes of crime. He wanted to appeal—and succeeded in appealing—to two constituencies at once: those who wanted criminals locked up, and those who saw crime as the natural consequence of social injustice, a kind of inchoate protest against the conditions in which they lived.

Blair's resultant task was to obfuscate, so that the electorate and even experts could not find out, without great difficulty, what was going on. For example, Blair's government, aware of public unrest about the number of criminals leaving prison only to commit further serious crimes, introduced indeterminate sentencing—open-ended imprisonment—apparently a tough response to repeat offenders. But the reality was different: the sentencing judges still had the discretion to determine such criminals' parole dates, which, in England, are de facto release dates. The sentences that criminals would serve, in other words, would be no longer than before the new law.

Another way to confuse the public was to corrupt official statistics. Last year, to take one example, the government dropped three simple but key measures from the compendious statistics that it gathers about people serving community sentences—that is, various kinds of service and supervision outside prison: their criminal histories prior to sentencing, their reconviction rates, and the number given prison sentences while serving their community sentences. Instead, it introduced an utterly meaningless measure, at least from a public-safety perspective: the proportion of people with community sentences who abide by such conditions as weekly attendance for an hour at a probation office.

The police also received encouragement to keep crime numbers down by not recording crimes. The crime rate has fallen in part because shoplifting has ceased to be a crime, for instance. Police now deal with it the way they do with parking violations: shoplifters get on-the-spot fines worth half, on average, of the value of the goods that they have stolen.

The problem of unemployment in Britain illustrates perfectly the methods that Blair's government used to obscure the truth. The world generally believes that, thanks to Labour's prudent policies, Britain now enjoys low unemployment; indeed, Blair has often lectured other leaders on the subject. The low rate is not strictly a lie: those counted officially as unemployed are today relatively few.

Unfortunately, those counted as sick are many; and if you add the numbers of unemployed and sick together, the figure remains remarkably constant in recent years, oscillating around 3.5 million, though the proportion of sick to unemployed has risen rapidly. Approximately 2.7 million people are receiving disability benefits in Britain, 8 or 9 percent of the workforce, highly concentrated in the areas of former unemployment; more people are claiming that psychiatric disorders prevent them from working than are claiming that work is unavailable. In the former coal-mining town of Merthyr Tydfil, about a quarter of the adult population is on disability. Britain is thus the ill man of Europe, though all objective indicators suggest that people

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are living longer and healthier lives than ever.

Three groups profit from this statistical legerdemain: first, the unemployed themselves, because disability benefits are about 60 percent higher than unemployment benefits, and, once one is receiving them, one does not have to pretend to be looking for work; second, the doctors who make the bogus diagnoses, because by doing so they remove a possible cause of conflict with their patients and, given the assault rate on British doctors, this is important to them; and finally, the government, which can claim to have reduced unemployment.

But such obfuscation is destructive of human personality. The unemployed have to pretend something untrue—namely, that they are sick; the medical profession winds up humiliated and dispirited by taking part in fraud; and the government avoids, for a time, real economic problems. Thus the whole of society finds itself corrupted and infantilized by its inability to talk straight; and that Blair could speak with conviction of the low unemployment rate, and believe that he was telling the truth, is to me worse than if he had been a dastardly cynic.

Tony Blair's most alarming characteristic, however, has been his enmity to freedom in his own country, whatever his feelings about it in other countries. No British prime minister in 200 years has done more to curtail civil liberties than has Blair. Starting with an assumption of his infinite beneficence, he assumed infinite responsibility, with the result that Britain has become a country with a degree of official surveillance that would make a Latin American military dictator envious. Sometimes this surveillance is merely ludicrous—parking-enforcement officers' wearing miniature closed-circuit security cameras in their caps to capture abusive responses from those ticketed, say, or local councils' attaching sensing devices to the garbage cans of 3 million homes to record what people throw away, in order to charge them for the quantity and quality of their trash.

But often the government's reach is less innocuous. For example, in the name of national security, the government under Blair's leadership sought to make passport applicants provide 200 pieces of information about themselves, including bank-account details, and undergo interrogation for half an hour. If an applicant refused to allow the information to circulate through other government departments, he would not get a passport, with no appeal. The government also cooked up a plan to require passport holders to inform the police if they changed their address.

A justification presented for these Orwellian arrangements was the revelation that a would-be terrorist, Dhiren Barot, had managed to obtain nine British passports before his arrest because he did not want an accumulation of stamps from suspect countries in any of them. At the same time, it came to light that the Passport Office issues 10,000 passports a year to fraudulent applicants—hardly surprising, since its staff consists largely of immigrants, legal and illegal.

As was often the case with Blair and his government, the solution proposed was not only completely disproportionate to the problem; it was not even a solution. The government has admitted that criminal gangs have already forged the U.K.'s new high-tech passports. The only people, then, whom the process will trouble are the people who need no surveillance. No sensible person denies the danger of Islamic extremism in Britain; but just as the fact that the typical Briton finds himself recorded by security cameras 300 times a day does not secure him in the slightest from crime or antisocial behavior, which remain prevalent in Britain, so no one feels any safer from the terrorist threat despite the ever-increasing government surveillance.

Blair similarly showed no respect for precedent and gradual reform by Parliament itself, which—in the absence of an American-style written constitution—have been the nation's guiding principles. By decree, he made the civil service answerable to unelected political allies, for the first time in history; he devoted far less

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attention to Parliament than did any previous prime minister; the vast majority of legislation under his premiership (amounting to a blizzard so great that lawyers cannot keep up with it) passed without effective parliamentary oversight, in effect by decree; one new criminal offense was created every day except Sundays for ten years, 60 percent of them by such decree, ranging from the selling of gray squirrels and Japanese bindweed to failure to nominate someone to turn off your house alarm if it triggers while you are out; he abolished the independence of the House of Lords, the only, and very limited, restraint on the elected government's power; he eliminated the immemorial jurisprudential rule against double jeopardy; he wanted to introduce preventive detention for people whom doctors deemed dangerous, even though they had as yet committed no crime; he passed a Civil Contingencies Act that permits the British government, if it believes that an emergency anywhere in the world threatens serious damage to human welfare or to the environment in Britain, to confiscate or destroy property without compensation.

That Blair should have turned out to be so authoritarian ought to come as no surprise to those who listened to the timbre of some of his early pronouncements. His early emphasis on youth; his pursuit of what he called, grandiosely, the Third Way (as if no one had thought of it before); his desire to create a "New Britain"; his assertion that the Labour Party was the political arm of the British people (as if people who did not support it were in some way not British)—some have thought all this contained a Mussolinian, or possibly Peronist, ring. It is ridiculous to say that Tony Blair was a fascist; but it would be equally absurd to see him as a defender of liberty, at least in his own country.

Blair found the Muslim threat far easier to tackle abroad than at home, perhaps because it required less courage. Intentionally or not, he pandered to domestic Muslim sentiment. During the general election, in which the leader and deputy leader of the opposition were Jewish, he allowed Labour to portray them as pigs on election campaign posters. The Jewish vote in Britain is small, and scattered throughout the country; the Muslim vote is large, and concentrated in constituencies upon which the whole election might turn. It is not that Blair is anti-Semitic: no one would accuse him of that. It is simply that, if mildly anti-Semitic connotations served his purposes, he would use them, doubtless persuaded that it was for the higher good of mankind.

Further, Blair's wife, Cherie, is a lawyer who now practices little, but who by convenient coincidence—immediately before a general election, and at a time of Muslim disaffection with Labour over the Iraq War—appeared before the highest court in the land, defending a 15-year-old girl who claimed the right to wear full Muslim dress in school. It turned out that an extreme British Islamic group backed the case legally and financially.

Blair also presided over the extension of mail voting in Muslim areas, despite having been warned about the likely consequence: that frequently, the male heads of households would vote for all registered voters under their roofs. Indeed, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Blair supported voting by mail because of this consequence, which would tip the vote toward the many Labour candidates who were Muslim men themselves. Pro-Labour fraud became so widespread that the judge leading a judicial inquiry into an election in Birmingham concluded that it would have disgraced a banana republic. The prime minister also proved exceptionally feeble during the Danish cartoon crisis, and repeatedly said things about Islam—that it is a religion of peace, for one—that he must have known to be untrue.

Blair, then, is no hero. Many in Britain believe that he has been the worst prime minister in recent British history, morally and possibly financially corrupt, shallow and egotistical, a man who combined the qualities of Elmer Gantry with those of Juan Domingo Perón. America should think twice about taking him to its heart now that he has stepped down. ■

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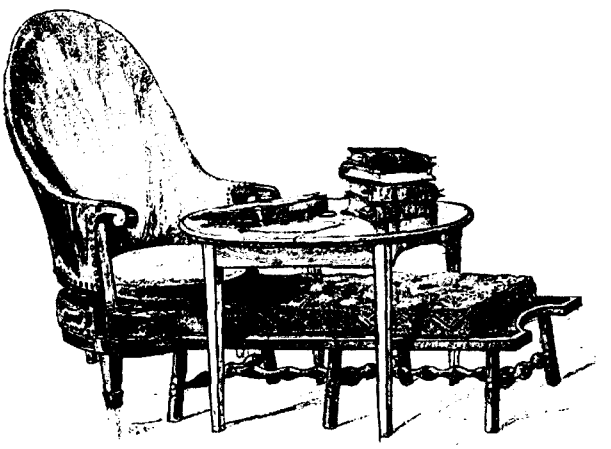
Letters

China's Lies

To the editor:

Thank you for Guy Sorman's article on China ["The Empire of Lies," Spring 2007]. Years of studying the oppression of religious groups there and the tutelage of my professor (a survivor of the Cultural Revolution) taught me to see through the media's optimistic spin. Your work greatly aids awareness of the true conditions in China.

Vanessa Phin
Baltimore, Maryland



BROWN BROTHERS

JEFFERSON'S CHAIR AND WRITING-TABLE.

White Lies

To the editor:

The rule of you [Andrew Klavan, "The Big White Lie," Spring 2007], and others of manifest personality disorders and Leo Straussian Fascist tendencies, is coming to an end. So blather on to no avail, oh evil one.

Tom O'Malley
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

To the editor:

My eyes are opened. I am a barbarian, out of step with modern times. But now, I'm not going to be ashamed of it.

John Heeder
American Fork, Utah

Drinking It In

To the editor:

I have rarely read an essay as sensitive to the complex, angry, formidable, and brilliantly insightful character of Arthur Koestler ["A Drinker of Infinity," Spring 2007]. That character is all too easy to vulgarize. Theodore Dalrymple's essay holds all the ends together, without trivializing to laud or condemn.

Martin Krygier
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Sharpe Exception

To the editor:

Newark is a thriving city with a diverse population ["Cory Booker's Battle for Newark," Spring 2007]. Our crime rate was lower than New York's under Giuliani. I am offended by the lack of objectivity in your article and your skewering of the leader of the last 20 years, Sharpe James.

Alturrick Kenney
Newark, New Jersey

Steven Malanga responds:

Only a Sharpe James supporter could call Newark "a thriving city," with double the U.S. poverty and unemployment rate, average household income half the rest of New Jersey's, and 68 percent out-of-wedlock births. The crime rate is higher than Giuliani's when he took over in New York; translated to New York's population, it would equal more than 3,000 homicides a year.

Judging Thomas

To the editor:

I was surprised that you did not discuss *Bush* v. *Gore* ["Reading the Constitution Right," Spring 2007]. Judge Thomas seemed to betray his belief in states' rights to reach a politically correct outcome.

Barry Davis
Eugene, Oregon

Stephen B. Presser responds:

Bush v. *Gore* wasn't a states' rights case but one where a state court violated due-process concepts and failed to follow federal guidelines for securing a safe harbor for electors. Also, Thomas wrote no opinion in the case.

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Cover artist Fabrice Moreau, born in Blois, graduated from Paris's École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et des Métiers d'Art. On the cover: his watercolor of the Dakota, on the Upper West Side. From *New York Sketchbook* by Fabrice Moreau. Copyright © 2005 by the author and reprinted by permission of St. Martin's Press, LLC.

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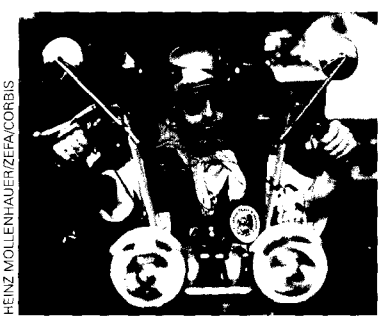
Giving Up the Hog

Jerry Weinberger

With a heavy heart, I've just put my Harley-Davidson Dyna Glide up for sale in the *Lansing State Journal*. The Dyna is my second Harley; the first was a badass Sportster 1200 Custom that loosened the teeth after an hour in the saddle. I can't ride any more because three years ago, I got my foot down in a motorcycle rodeo and almost lost my right arm to the resulting (happily temporary) paraplegia. I still can't turn my head far enough to make my bike go exactly where I want it to, let alone to watch out for cell-phone-yakking drivers.

Motorcycles weren't an attraction of the early 1960s counterculture of my youth, when I first started to ride, largely because the Hog World then belonged to lowlife characters like Sonny Barger and the Berdoo Hell's Angels. But things began to change when *Easy Rider* came out in 1969. Who could have predicted what it would kick off? A hit TV program of the late 1970s and early 1980s, *CHiPs*, featured motorcycle cops in really tight jodhpurs. Arnold of California rides a Harley. Jay Leno does, too, and the ridiculous John Kerry paddled a Harley onto his show in 2003. There are Jewish motorcycle clubs like Hillel's Angels (Jews can ride Hogs, they just can't eat 'em). The Guggenheim has produced an exhibit called *The Art of the Motorcycle*. The still-living Barger now peddles a book, *Freedom: Credos from the Road*, which espouses a philosophy called the Zen of the Highway.

And Harley riders are now as likely to stop for a latte as for a beer. In 1985, the median motorcyclist was 27 years old. By 2003, he was 41. It's rare to find anybody under 50 on a Harley—like the Corvette, it just costs too much for the young. Hogs are now for geezers, many of them rich



HEINZ MOLLENHAUER/ZEFA/CORBIS

leather-garbed biker-wannabes. And lately, a lot of these wealthy crazies are getting bumped off crashing their motorcycles. Between 1997 and 2005, motorcycle deaths soared a whopping 115 percent. (New York ranks sixth among states in motorcycles on the road, so the increased carnage has to be felt in the Big Apple, too.) The piles of dead lawyers and stockbrokers will grow, but at least their kids will have finished college.

The numbers have provoked certain activists to scream for more helmet laws. Well, maybe helmets save lives. But it makes better sense to think that it's really dangerous for a novice, helmet or no helmet, to take off down the road on a huge crotch rocket. And that goes triple if the novice is 50.

Even experience by itself isn't the answer. The fact is that it's impossible to learn how to stop a motorcycle properly from any amount of experience (unless God is riding two-up). That's because when you stop fast the rear goes up, not down, and if you stop fast enough the rear wheel locks, the rear end fishtails, and when you see the flailing rear end *out of the corner of your eye*, every synapse in your head tells you to get off the rear brake. That's when you die. I won't bore you with the physics, but it's called getting a "high side." Getting a high side at a mere five miles per hour will toss an 800-pound bike into the air and the bike will go far: and since you're on top, the machine lands on you. The whole deadly ballet can take only a second. I've seen this happen twice to others, to gruesome effect.

The only way to learn what to do is to be taught by an expert instructor—most of them are cops—first on dirt and then on pavement, and first at five miles an hour and eventually at 40. I've done the latter about 20 times, and even the last one made a certain part of my anatomy pucker up. Any rich middle-aged crazy who hasn't done the same—Arnold, Jay, are you listening?—is playing Russian roulette. ■

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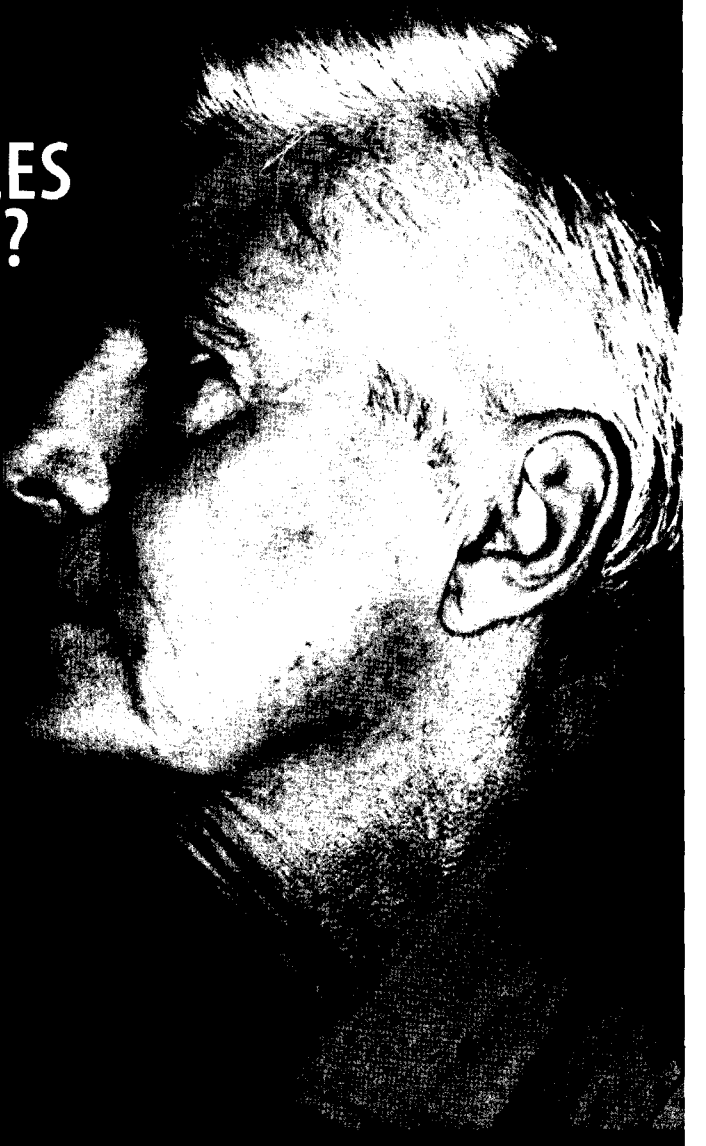

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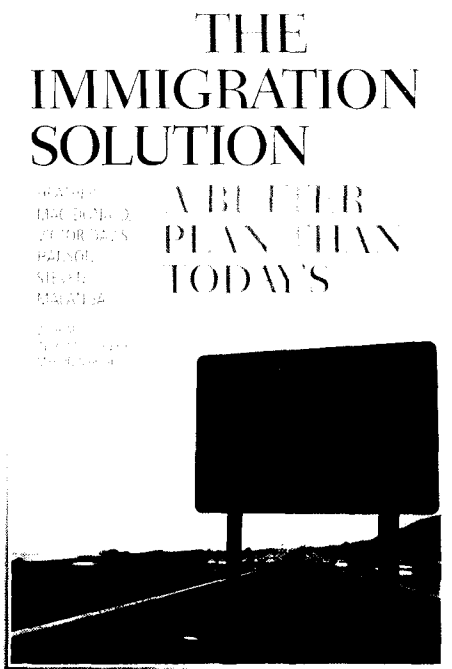

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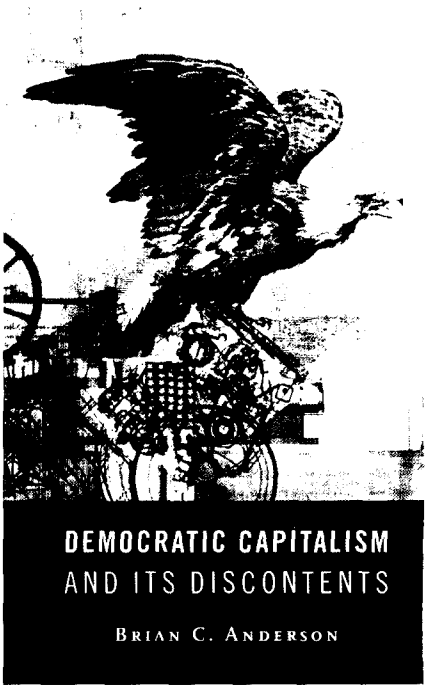

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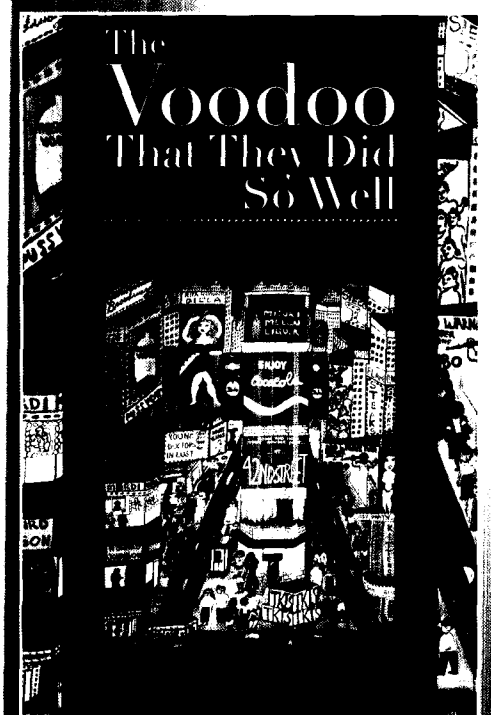

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